

CHAPTER

11

The Book Yourself Solid Direct Outreach Strategy

You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take.

—Wayne Gretzky

As a business owner, you'll need to proactively reach out to potential clients to make offers and to marketing partners and other decision makers to create business opportunities. In fact, the most important direct outreach you do might well be to other service professionals, businesses, and professional associations to network, cross-promote, and build referral relationships.

Let's clearly define what direct outreach is *not* before detailing exactly what it is and how to do it authentically, easily, and successfully. It is *not* spam, which has typically been considered unsolicited mail or e-mail, sent, without permission, to mailing lists or newsgroups. However, I think the way people now see spam has grown in scope and definition. Today, there are many more ways you can be labeled a spammer—even when you think you're standing in the service of potential clients or business associates.

As you know, spam is not the Book Yourself Solid way. It never has been and never will be. Before the advent of the Internet, direct outreach was a very common marketing strategy. I suppose it's no less common today, but unfortunately, it is often perceived as spam. You must be very careful and discerning with respect to how you use the Book Yourself Solid Direct Outreach Strategy.

You can now be labeled a spammer by sending an unsolicited e-mail directly to a potential client that contains any kind of sales message or promotional or business offer. The same goes for cold calling. Many people just consider that another kind of spam, since it's unsolicited. Even direct outreach to an individual through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms can get you pegged as irrelevant or worse, a spammer. Posting comments on a blog or other social media site, yes, even your friends' Facebook pages, can get you called out for spamming if they smack of self-promotion.

Clients now find you. That doesn't relieve you of your marketing responsibilities. You need to create awareness for what you offer so that when potential clients go looking for the kind of services you offer they find you. If you don't like the fact that clients want to find you, rather than the other way around, then blame Google. It has changed the way customers and businesses interact. When people go searching online they're willing to wade through junk in search of what they want because they feel in control of the process. When they find what they want, and if it's you, they'll give you permission to market to them.

Just because it's easy to broadcast our messages through e-mail, blogs, and social media platforms doesn't give us permission to force people to pay attention. We have to earn their attention—more than ever. My colleague Seth Godin, the father of Permission Marketing, puts it this way, “Go ahead and make what you want, as long as you stand behind it and don't bother me. If you want to sell magnetic bracelets or put risqué pictures on your web site, it's your responsibility, your choice. Want to find a web site featuring donkeys, naked jugglers, and various illicit acts? It's junk, sure, but it's out there. You just have to go find it. Junk turns into spam when you show up at my doorstep, when your noise intercepts my quiet.”

This is why, even though it's easier than ever to make noise and get noticed, direct outreach has become trickier than ever. When you reach out, unsolicited, to a potential client or business associate about a business opportunity, their default assumption is that you're a spammer interrupting their peace and quiet. Is it fair? Doesn't matter. Until there's a cure for selfishness, one that eliminates spammers and their spam, it's the reality that you and I have to deal with. Don't make noise that intercepts others' quiet.

You will find yourself using the Book Yourself Solid Direct Outreach Strategy time and time again when you want to reach out to:

- An ideal client or a referral partner within your target market
- The decision maker at an organization or association to cross-promote, secure speaking engagements, submit articles for publication, and more
- The press

Or a myriad of other business development opportunities.

Direct Outreach Gone Wrong

Sometimes the easiest way to understand a concept is to see real examples of what works and what doesn't. I don't want to scare you off from doing direct outreach. Just the opposite—I want to encourage you to do more of it, but in a way that will make sure you come across as a thoughtful, considerate, empathetic, relevant, and high integrity professional with value to add. To make sure you're always perceived this way, I'm going to show you a series of direct outreach messages sent to me that went terribly wrong. I've changed the names of all involved to protect the innocent but the following are actual messages from real people. In fact, I'm pretty sure they were sent by decent, hard-working professionals. Unfortunately, they haven't yet learned how to do direct outreach and, as a result, their messages landed like a ton of bricks.

Let's start with this brick, which landed in my LinkedIn inbox.

LinkedIn Recommendations

Maria Venter is requesting an endorsement for work.

Dear Michael,

I'm sending this to ask you for a brief recommendation of my work that I can include in my LinkedIn profile. If you have any questions, let me know.

Thanks in advance for helping me out.

—Maria Venter

Endorse Maria Venter. It only takes a minute. Your endorsement can help Maria Venter:

- Hire and get hired
- Win customers and partnerships
- Build a stronger professional reputation

This e-mail was sent to you by Maria Venter (email@website.com) through LinkedIn because Maria Venter entered your e-mail address. If you have any questions, please contact customer_service@linkedin.com.

This request from Maria is problematic for a number of reasons:

1. Let's start with the fact that I don't know her.
2. If I don't know Maria, why would I recommend she get hired, win customers and partnerships, and build a stronger professional reputation?
3. To send it, all she had to do was enter my e-mail address. Clearly no effort was demonstrated on her part.
4. My LinkedIn profile states that I don't check e-mail at LinkedIn. Rather, I request that people e-mail me at a public e-mail address, which I list.

What should have Maria done instead?

1. She could have started by giving me a recommendation first, if she thought I deserved one. Always better to offer something before asking for something.
2. If it was important to her that we connect, she could have attempted to meet me at an event, if it was convenient for her.
3. She could have commented on my blog posts or notes on my LinkedIn profile or Facebook Fan Page. This would have been noticed and appreciated.
4. She could have sent me an e-mail to my public e-mail address expressing some appreciation for my work or find some other way of making a personal connection through any number of other activities that don't ask for anything in return and don't make any assumptions.

My suggestions have nothing to do with professional status. I would approach anyone this way. Of course, if the person you're reaching out to is already familiar with your work or your name, the connecting process usually speeds up. And, if you're thinking that it's just novice business owners whose direct outreach goes wrong, think again.

This next e-mail is from a publicity and promotions manager at a marketing firm that represents best-selling authors and large publishing houses. I don't know the sender or the author and have no connection to the publisher of the book. Again, I've changed the names of all parties involved.

Dear Mr. Port,

I have not heard back from you on my e-mail below. This is a great opportunity to get your products out in front of a huge audience looking for this kind of material (our previous book campaign was seen by over 5 million people)! Not only will you be offering your subscribers an incredible package, you will also be directing more traffic to your web site and building your own mailing list. Remember, there is no cost involved.

Click on the link below to view a previous campaign we put together for

John Smith's New York Times bestselling book, XXXXXX:

<http://www.longurltoasalespage.com>

Please let me know right away if you would like to participate or if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Andrea Tiffonelli
Assistant Publicity and Promotions Manager
Progressive Marketing Firm, Inc.

What's so bad about a PR or marketing firm reaching out to an author to see if he'll help promote another author? Nothing. Nothing at all. In fact, one of the primary ways authors get noticed is through promotion from other authors. So, what's wrong with this one?

1. I don't know any of the parties involved and they're sending me what is clearly a form e-mail. It's not personalized in any way.
2. Andrea makes all sorts of assumptions about why I would want to promote this author. She has no idea what really makes me tick and didn't take the time to find out.
3. In the last line, Andrea tells me to let her know "right away" if I want to participate. She clearly demonstrated a lack of respect or appreciation for my time, schedule, life, and so forth. It's not wrong to try to encourage someone to act quickly when promoting a product or service, but this is not such a promotion (her mistake is that she thinks it is). Fundamentally, it's a request to a colleague to help out another colleague and at this point, after all the other offenses in this e-mail, telling me what to do and when to do it is off-putting.
4. This is actually the fourth e-mail Andrea sent to me about this "opportunity." If I didn't respond the first three times, might that be saying something? And, to add insult to injury, every

time Andrea sent me an e-mail I wrote back asking her to stop e-mailing me. Obviously, she ignored my requests. It just confirms my suspicion that I was added to a “list” of authors to whom they’re trying to get to participate in their book promotions. That makes it real, honest-to-goodness, 100 percent spam.

What should Andrea have done instead? Well, since I didn’t request any information on her promotions or the authors she represents, she could have sent me a short note to this effect:

Dear Michael,

My name is Andrea Tiffonelli. I’m the Assistant Publicity and Promotions Manager for Progressive Marketing Firm, Inc. We represent authors and help them promote their books.

I’m writing to you today to let you know that I’m a fan of your work and appreciate the way you teach marketing. It really helps people who don’t typically like marketing and selling—like most of the authors I represent.

Again, just saying “hi” and thanks for your work. If there is anything I can do to be of service to you, please just say the word.

Sincerely,

Andrea Tiffonelli
Assistant Publicity and Promotions Manager
Progressive Marketing Firm, Inc.

What works so well about this alternative version of the e-mail?

1. She’s not asking anything of me on her first contact.
2. She quickly tells me who she is and what she does right off the bat.
3. She praises me and demonstrates that, not only is she familiar with my work, she seems to know what I stand for.
4. She closes by offering her support with no expectation of anything in return.

This is how you start a relationship. Over time, a few more, relevant and personal interactions like this would earn her the proportionate amount of trust and credibility needed to see if I'd be interested in getting involved in one of her author promotions.

Here's another one. It's long. Very long. Which is just one of its many problems. There is, however, one simple fix that could have saved this effort. Can you tell what it is?

This is Jerry Faber and I'm working with Tom Rose, The [REDACTED] Coach, looking for a few very special joint venture partners for his upcoming Quick-Start 3-Day [REDACTED] Workshop.

[REDACTED] are Hot and getting Hotter! And anybody who wants to have a successful online business needs [REDACTED] as part of their funnel. So we want to offer you the opportunity to host a preview call with Tom for his highly acclaimed [REDACTED] Workshop.

Tom has been teaching this workshop for the past 5 years and has helped hundreds of frustrated writers become successful authors. (You can see his long list of testimonials at www.firstwebsite.com.)

I'm contacting you because Tom and I believe that you and Tom are speaking to the same target market, and that this offer will be very lucrative for you while providing great value for your list.

This opportunity pays from \$200 to \$1000 commission on every sale (depending on which level your subscribers register for).

For the complete details on this JV opportunity go to: www.secondweb site.com

Basically, here's the way this JV works.

Once you agree to do a jv call with Tom (The call is on "The 7 Biggest Mistakes People Make When [REDACTED] And How To Avoid Them" and it has converted from 11%–22%), we'll set up the pages for the call and send you a link to all of the materials you will need to promote it, including a promo e-mail series, blog posts and tweets to mail to your list.

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Then, over the coming weeks, we'll "drip" great content on them (unless it's the week of the Workshop. We do a final Q and A call that week).

If they buy, on or after your call with Tom through your affiliate link, you will get the following commissions.

Platinum Plus package pays \$1000.

Platinum package pays \$500.

Gold Package pays \$200.

You can see the sales page at: www.thirdwebsite.com.

If you're interested in doing a JV call with Tom, please let me know. You can e-mail me directly at: jerry@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at jerry@gmail.com.

Or, if you're ready to get started, e-mail me at jerry@gmail.com and I'll send you everything you need to get started as soon as we can get the web pages set up.

Thank you for your time. We truly appreciate it—and look forward to having the opportunity to joint venture with you. And we'd like to give you a gift for taking the time to read this e-mail:

www.fourthwebsite.com is a pdf with 28 ways to use Twitter. We hope it helps you prosper even more!

Best Wishes,

Jerry Faber
For Tom Rose
The [xxxx] Coach

P.S. If you want to know more about Tom, you can see his bio at: www.fifthwebsite.com.

You can see his videos at: www.sixthwebsite.com.

Holy cow. Where do I start?

1. It's insanely long.
2. Tom and Jerry are making all sorts of assumptions about why I would be interested in this joint venture.
3. It's filled with nonsensical hyperbole like ". . . are hot and getting Hotter! And anybody who wants to have a successful online business needs . . ."
4. Jerry mentions the marketing funnel, which demonstrates that he's not particularly familiar with my work because I write quite a bit about how I don't like the philosophy behind the marketing funnel.
5. He thinks he needs to tell me how a jv like this works.
6. He gives me his e-mail address three times within three sentences.
7. He wants me to look at six different web sites.
8. He offers me a "gift" of an ebook on how to use Twitter for taking the time to read his e-mail. Does he think I'm unfamiliar with Twitter and how to use it?
9. And, what might be the biggest offense of all, he tells me that I'll be blasting my e-mail newsletter subscribers, tweeting to my followers, and promoting Tom's product on my blog. If Tom and Jerry think that I would indiscriminately promote someone that I don't know to my subscribers, readers, and followers, for a few dollars in commissions, then it's obvious they don't know how I operate and don't have a lot of respect for their subscribers.

So, what should Jerry have done? Did you figure out the simple fix to this total disaster of a direct outreach attempt? If you're thinking that he should have simply sent me a short note asking if I even do these kinds of jv's, you're absolutely right. If he had, I would have told him that I don't and no love would have been lost. Instead, Tom and Jerry wasted my time (and theirs) asking me to read this unrequested e-mail about their jv opportunity. Here's what a better direct outreach attempt could have looked like.

Dear Michael,

My name is Jerry Faber and I work with Tom Rose, who teaches courses on [REDACTED] creation. I enjoy your work and really like your style. I don't want to take up much of your time so, if I may ask one quick question . . .

I'm wondering if you ever promote products from other experts in exchange for commissions on sales? If so, would you consider learning more about Tom and a joint venture campaign we're putting together? If not, I completely understand and I thank you for your time, nonetheless. Both Tom and I appreciate your work and hope to have the opportunity to meet you at some point in the future.

If there is anything we can do for you, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Best Wishes,
Jerry Faber
For Tom Rose
www.onewebsitehere.com

Even if Tom and Jerry used the letter I suggested, they're still not guaranteed a response. But they would at least have come across as professional and respectful, two of the most important components of credibility.

Here's one more short one. Can you figure out what's wrong with this note? Besides the fact that I received it through my Facebook account—which clearly states, just like my LinkedIn Profile, “*Don't send e-mail here. Instead, please send to questions@michaelport.com.*”

Michael, please accept my friend request. Tell me about what you do. I see you have written a book. What's it called? What's it about? I'm also working on a book and a project you might be interested in. I would like to discuss potential business opportunities with you.

Here, this woman, asked to friend me. Of course, my Facebook page explains what I do and lists all four of my books. So perhaps it's just my ego talking, but one would hope that she would make a little effort to, at least, scan the page—do a little homework on me. And, I think that's the rub. We all have some ego around something. To fast forward the process and ask for business without building some foundation is more than just ineffective, it's a turnoff.

You Will Connect More When You've Got the Skinny

It doesn't matter if you are prospecting, door knocking, outreaching, introducing, or just plain canvassing. If you do any or all of these without knowing the person or business you are contacting, you may as well be calling the president of the United States. At best, you'll find yourself winded, your time wasted, or your wares unwanted. Or, at worst . . . humiliated. No one wants to feel like a cheesy, shady, pushy, or unprepared salesperson.

So, you say at the end of the day you want to create a never-ending pool of heartwarming and bank account-filling clients? You want to capture more sales? You want to get booked solid? Make more money? Create a nest egg? Then, do me a favor. Show up front, center, and in the know with all the people you want to know. There's no minimizing your overall effectiveness and confidence when you're packin' preparation. So find out . . .

1. *What motivates the person?* What really gets the person's juices flowing? What makes his eyes sparkle? It might be business, family, or hobbies. Look at the photos, books, and other things sitting on or near his desk or on his web site or social media pages. What is he reading, referring to others, or genuinely interested in?
2. *What has the person accomplished?* Do an online search. Go to her site and do a Google Image search if you don't know what her smiling face looks like yet. Who is singing her praises? Has she won awards, received acknowledgments, public recognition, or publication announcements?
3. *What common interests might you have?* How have your paths crossed? Express your compassion, enthusiasm, and understanding for these

shared interests. Keep your focus coming back to the person. Use these common interests as a starting place to learn more about how they feel and think about the world.

4. *Who are the person's peers?* Do you have any mutual friends or social circle overlap? Do you have common Facebook friends or Twitter followers? And, are you involved in these circles? Be informed and stay connected.
5. *Who is his competition?* Know the opportunities and challenges he faces in his business. What challenges will you help him overcome? And what opportunities will you, ultimately, help him fulfill?
6. *What unique benefits do you offer?* What do others love about the way you do business? Be easy. Know your strengths. Show up as the kind of person people love being with and want to do business with.
7. *What excites you about knowing or working with this person?* We all want to feel appreciated, acknowledged, and respected. Share how the person's work and opinions have influenced or affected you. Stay positive, be yourself, and be complimentary.
8. *What do you believe is possible for the person?* No matter how confident or successful we appear, all of us have limiting beliefs. Can you see areas of business or life where the person has been holding back? Describe in detail (but keep it to yourself, for now) the true potential you see for the person based on what they want and need. As you get to know each other, you *may* decide to share what you see.
9. *What is your current status or role in the person's life?* Don't overrate or exaggerate who you are or why the person should work or connect with you. Be realistic about what you bring to the table and how you see the relationship unfolding. The best relationships grow slowly and with a foundation of trust.
10. *How can you become an indispensable asset to the person?* Do you truly know how and why the person should know or work with you? Do you believe that her life will be happier, easier, fuller, richer, or just plain better with the benefit of you and your services?

Sales aren't always sensible. Connecting isn't always cool. Even if your proposition seems picture perfect . . . life, decisions, and relationships are always wrapped up in underlying influences. Some of these foundational influences we can see quickly at first glance, while others take a bit more time.

But, when you show up knowledgeable and prepared, you address the human needs of the people you want to serve, and you are closer to meeting both the other person's needs and your own. You might have a shot at getting what you ask for. Plus, aren't conversations just easier and more fun when you know and share these commonalities. Doors stop slamming. People start playing and they start paying, too.

When initiating your direct outreach strategy, please make sure that your efforts are targeted, individualized, valuable, and legitimate so they are not perceived as spam and are instead appreciated and acted upon.

Using the Book Yourself Solid Direct Outreach Strategy is all about making personal connections. Whichever of the following direct outreach tools you employ, you should be reaching out to others from the heart, in a way that is genuine and authentic for you.

When I was an actor (that was my first career) I had a modicum of success. I appeared in *Sex and the City*, *Third Watch*, *Law & Order*, *All My Children*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Down to Earth*, and many other shows. I also did hundreds of television commercials and voiceovers, but hung up my hat for what I thought was the meaning and stability of a career in the corporate world. Boy was I wrong about the "meaning" thing. Anyhow . . . in my acting days, I recall blowing auditions because I was trying to knock it out of the park. Instead of focusing on getting the callback, I was focusing on getting the part. What I should have done was focus on getting the callback. Then, once I had the callback, work on getting the second callback. Then, once I had the second callback, work to get the producer's meeting. Once I had the producer's meeting, work to get the screen test, and so on. I want you to do the same thing with your direct outreach. Take it one step at a time and you'll do fine, and it will feel more authentic to you.

Only One Link in the Chain of Destiny Can Be Handled at a Time

There are lots of different tools that you can use to reach out to other people. You can write e-mails, letters, or postcards. You can reach out to people through social media sites including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. You can use the phone. And you can do what I call the whatever-it-takes direct outreach, as long as it doesn't get you arrested; like parachuting into the backyard of the CEO of Google because you think you have a great service to offer his company. It will get you noticed but not in a good way.

These tools can be instruments with which you can make beautiful music or they can be weapons of mass destruction. It just depends on how you use them. My mantra is Winston Churchill's quote: "It is a mistake to look too far ahead. Only one link of the chain of destiny can be handled at a time." Keep that on the top of your mind as you progress through the direct outreach process and you'll be able to avoid desperate direct outreach measures. You'll build trust over time instead and end up swimming in success.

When reaching out to others, you'll go through multiple stages of relationship development. At each stage of the process you'll, hopefully, build more trust and earn more credibility with your new friend, much like the Book Yourself Solid Sales Cycle Process that you learned in Chapter 6. And, just like the sales cycle, no relationship will develop in the exact same way. There isn't a secret formula that will guarantee everyone will love you and do exactly as you wish but there is a way to know whom to contact when, how to make contact, and whether to do it again—and the method requires a well-developed social intelligence.

Socially Successful Conduct

When I'm asked, "What are the best marketing and sales books ever written?" My answer is always the same, "Besides my books?" Kidding. In all seriousness, my answer is, just one: *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*, by Daniel Goleman, a popular science writer. Why a

book that draws on social neuroscience research to help learn how to market and sell professional services? Because, social intelligence can be defined as a person's competence to comprehend his or her environment and react appropriately for socially successful conduct. And socially successful conduct is what ensures successful direct outreach.

Understanding the concepts people use to make sense of their social relations can help you understand things like, *What situation am I in and how do I talk to this kind of person?* You can also learn rules that help you draw references like, *What did he mean by that?* as well as plan your actions so you can decide, *What am I going to do about that?*

You may or may not like this concept, depending on your interpretation of self, but your ability to succeed in many entrepreneurial endeavors is, in large part, based on your self-awareness and social savvy. Being able to understand yourself and what's going on with others and then skillfully responding to them is a question of social intelligence, not how many different clever pitches you've memorized or methods you've got on hand to impress.

According to Goleman, humans are wired to connect, neurologically speaking. Holy rapid-fire synapses, Batman! That means you are wired to market and sell! But really, all brain function aside, you've already got the mental crampons to do the steep climbing and naturally scale to the top of your class.

Marvel at this. The news gets even better. Goleman doesn't believe that these competencies (the ability to connect) are necessarily innate, but rather can be learned capabilities, if worked on and developed to achieve outstanding performance. Darn-tootin' right, my sharp, big thinker. There's nothing phantom about your direct outreach success. To perform at your highest level and enhance how you connect to real people in the real world, increase your social intelligence. With diligence, reflection, and the commitment to improve, set aside time to study your:

- *Self-awareness.* The ability to read your own emotions and recognize their impact on others while using gut feelings to guide decisions.
- *Self-management.* Involves controlling your emotions, impulses, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

- *Social awareness.* Your ability to sense, understand, and react to others' emotions while comprehending social networks.
- *Relationship management.* The ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict.

While you are at it:

- Toss the trite sales pitch and never formulate another “smart” thought. Develop the keen ability to listen and hear what others truly want and need.
- Tear up the How-to-Get-Anything-You-Want-in-3-Easy-Steps manual and increase your empathy by entering into the realm of others' feelings.
- Step away from the PowerPoint presentation and study your self-presentation so you can foster credibility, trust, and connection confidence.

Social intelligence is defined as a person's competence to comprehend his environment and react appropriately for socially successful conduct. This brand of intelligence is therefore *the* most important component of your direct outreach strategies.

Understanding the concepts people use to make sense of their social relations can help you improve your social awareness, presence, authenticity, clarity, and empathy. Bottom line: you'll be more attuned to the needs and desires of others, which will make you more relevant and influential.

The Book Yourself Solid List of 20

Make a list of 20 people within your industry with whom you'd like to develop professional relationships. These are people whom you do not yet know— influencers within your target market who can help you get booked solid. This is your BYS List of 20. The list never leaves your side.

It sits on your desk. Lives on your computer. And travels with you when you're on the road. Why 20 and why must you keep it with you at all times? Since your success is, in large part, determined by the people within your industry who are willing to refer others to you or to put you in front of your ideal clients or endorse you, you need to keep these people at the top of your mind. Keeping this list by your side will ensure that you're thinking of them and, if you do, you'll begin to notice opportunities to connect with them and get to know them. And 20, because it's a large enough number to keep your focus expansive but narrow enough that you won't be overwhelmed.

4.11.1 Written Exercise: Identify a minimum of three and a maximum of 20 people you'd like to reach out to directly and personally. (These may be prospective clients, decision makers at an organization or association, or the press.) At this moment, you might not think you can fill out your list of 20, but now that you know what you need to do, you'll start to take notice of the people you should add to this list. You'll see in a minute how your list will grow far beyond just 20 people.

In the Book Yourself Solid® BYS List marketing software at BookYourselfSolid.com/software, there is a special section for your list of 20. Here's what the software will help you do with you list. (If you're not using the software, make sure you find another way to track this process and create an accountability structure of some sort to make sure you get it done.)

- Each day, the system will prompt you to reach out to the person at the top of the list, giving you options on exactly how to connect with him.
- After you've reached out to this person, the system will place this person in the twentieth spot on the list and prompt you to connect with him again after 20 business days, which is about one month.

- Now that this person has been moved to the end of the list, the person who was Number Two on the list becomes Number One and each other person on the list moves up one spot. This way your list of 20 always stays at 20.

This direct outreach activity occurs every day. You'll reach out to one new person, each and every day, and you'll follow up with people you've already reached out to, each and every day. This is critical. Dedicated, disciplined, and determined action is key to your direct outreach success. Remember, the Book Yourself Solid List of 20 is your wish list. Your list of 20 people who could have a significant impact on your business through their referrals, introductions, and advice. Do this daily and you'll be booked solid in no time flat.

4.11.2 Booked Solid Action Step: Reach out to the first person on your list of 20 and then add her to your follow-up system. Then add a new person to your list of 20.

Making Your Case

When you get to the point in a relationship at which it's time to make your case for something you want, usually after the initial courtship, the next step is to expand upon your reason for contacting her and make your case. To do this, there are three things that others take into account, whether consciously or unconsciously, when they consider a proposal you make:

1. Is it going to be successful?
2. Is it worth doing?
3. Is this person able to do what she says she can?

If you get a resounding "Yes!" for each question, you're in. If your reader raises an eyebrow at even one of the questions, you've probably

gone as far as you're going to go with this person. For your direct outreach to be effective, all the questions must be answered in the affirmative. Also, to make sure all your bases are covered, before you make any calls or send out any letters or e-mail, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I connect with the reader about one of her accomplishments?
- Do I indicate that I will follow up?
- Do I know how I'm going to follow up?
- Am I being direct without pushing?
- Am I being real in the message?
- Am I clear about the next steps?

Whatever-It-Takes Direct Outreach

You can do a lot to grab attention, but attention is only valuable if it shows you off in a light that's flattering. If you're a creative soul with a strong and developed sense of play, you'll have a lot of fun conceiving of and executing no-rules attention-grabbing direct outreach campaigns. Because, yeah, there may be a time when someone you really want to connect with is just not paying attention.

Years ago, when I was a vice president at an entertainment company, I had a boss who swore, literally, every which way till Sunday that I had to get a particular executive at a big cosmetics firm to agree to sponsor one of our programs. The only problem was that the executive wouldn't take my calls. I tried to explain to my boss that I didn't think they were the right fit for us, but he disagreed and directed me to make it happen.

After a few more weeks of trying to get a meeting with the executive, I was about to give up when his assistant, the toughest gatekeeper I'd ever encountered, let slip that the executive was at lunch when I called. Just making pleasant conversation, I asked, "Oh, yeah? What'd he go for today?" "Chinese, it's his favorite . . ." she replied, without thinking much about it. "Okay, thanks. Have a nice day!" I said and hung up.

The next day I had a great big order of Chinese food delivered to him at that exact same time. Inside the order was the proposal for the project. Twenty minutes after the food arrived, I called him. This time I was put right through. I said, “Will you take a look at my proposal now?” “No,” he answered. “Why not?” I asked. “Because I don’t like any of the dishes you sent over.” “What do you like?” I asked. He told me. I said, “If I send these over tomorrow, will you read my proposal and take a meeting with me?” He said, “No, but I will read your proposal. If I like it, then I’ll take a meeting with you.” I said, “Great. When would you like me to follow up?” He told me and we said goodbye. He did like the proposal and subsequently took a meeting with me, but we never actually made a deal. It turned out that our companies really weren’t a good fit, just like I was telling my boss. But we became friendly, and he introduced me to one of my first clients after I left the corporate world and started my own business. You just never know.

One of my clients was trying to connect with a meeting planner at a large multinational corporation and couldn’t get the planner to give him the time of day. After all his other direct outreach attempts failed, he sent her a coconut with a note that said, “You’re a tough nut to crack. How about it?” She was still laughing when she called him to schedule an appointment.

Think creatively about what kind of fun, outrageous, no-rules attention-grabbing direct outreach strategies would work for you. Really let loose and let the ideas flow freely.

4.11.3 Written Exercise: List five wild, wacky, and unique ways to make a personal connection, especially with anyone you’ve been unsuccessful connecting with in the more traditional ways.

Direct Outreach Plan

There are many ways to connect with potential clients and customers, but none of the concepts I laid out are effective without a plan. After you identify a person or organization you’d like to reach out to, what do

you do? Do you create a plan and then execute the plan? No? Well, that's okay because now you will and you'll be delighted with the success your new plan will bring. Each day, when working with your BYS List of 20, here's how to keep it simple.

1. Identify the individual you're going to reach out to.
2. Choose the steps you'll take to connect with her.
3. Create a schedule for your initiatives.
4. Execute the plan.
5. Evaluate the plan.

Patience and Persistence Pay Off

Remember that there is no *trick* to direct outreach. The magic formula to direct outreach, if there is one, is a consistent and open course of action throughout the life of your business. Direct outreach, like networking and keeping in touch, is something that must become a part of your regular routine. It takes time, but if you're patient and persistent, you *will* book yourself solid.