

Quadrant II Newsletter

Research shows that the difference between leaders who derail in their career and those that soar to great heights is social skills. Social skills appear in the second quadrant of Stephen R. Covey's Importance-Urgency matrix: social skills are important to a career but not urgent (Covey is author of the top-selling business book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). Quadrant II provides an opportunity for business and technical professionals to learn and try out new social skills based in science.

23Mar2016, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, *The Surprising Benefit of Being Sociable*

Quotable (*Key Message*)

Interact with others to keep your brain healthy for intellectual and collaborative pursuits.

Quantify (*The Science*)

In a 2008 study by Ybarra and colleagues, cognitive function following different activities was assessed for three different groups. One group was engaged in discussion of a social issue for 10 minutes. A second group solved crossword puzzles and engaged in other intellectually stimulating activities for 10 minutes. A third group was the control group which watched a 10-minute clip of Seinfeld. The improvement in cognitive functioning versus the control group was as high from the social interaction as from the intellectual stimulation after only 10 minutes. Ybarra and colleagues explained this finding by noting that social interaction involves the same mental processes that are involved in cognitive tasks such as memory, attention, and control (<http://sharpbrains.com/resources/7-opening-the-debate/why-social-engagement-can-boost-brain-function-the-case-for-walking-book-clubs/>).

Preceding, but complementing, Ybarra's study, Cambridge Psychologist Nick Humphrey found that the physical challenges facing different animal species including primates and humans was not sufficient to explain the differences in brain size. Humphrey's studies suggested that the driving force behind primates and humans developing relatively large brains compared to the rest of the animal species was social interaction. Social interactions included their ability to recognize one another, their ability to find a mate to reproduce, and their ability to track and manage their relationships. This work formed the basis for what is known as the "social intelligence hypothesis" today (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2042522/>). The "social intelligence hypothesis" says that it was the demands of living together that drove our need for intelligence.

Social interaction is so good for us that its absence, social isolation, is bad for us. There is quite an extensive body of research that correlates the lack of social contact, or social isolation, with poor health. There are even instances when social isolation can lead to death (<http://www.pnas.org/content/110/15/5797.full>): "We found that mortality was higher among more socially isolated and more lonely participants. However, after adjusting statistically for demographic factors and baseline health, social isolation remained significantly associated with mortality."

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

To help make the most of your opportunities for socializing, follow Fulcrum Connection's key principles for strategic networking as follows:

Give to receive: Find out what others DO (roles/responsibilities), WANT (career and project interests), KNOW (areas of expertise), and THINK (perspectives on

key issues) and then connect what you learn about the person with a contact or information you can provide that would be of value.

Find the greatness in all people you meet: Approach everyday opportunities to network as a way to deepen relationships with others because you never know who will need what you know and who will know what you need: find out with authentic interest what the person you meet and their contacts do, want to do, what they know, and what they think.

Be prepared: Do homework prior to opportunities to connect with others by preparing questions, explaining the reason for and importance of the questions, and clearly and concisely describing the challenge or opportunity you are facing or are interested in behind the questions.

Quip (*Fun*)



The next time you feel guilty socializing rather than working on an airplane, remember that you are exercising your brain and will increase your capacity to do the work later. Of course you can no longer smoke on an airplane like Roger Sterling from Mad Men shown here.

Quest (*Resources*)

Dr. Valerie Patrick, Founder and President of Fulcrum Connection LLC, is an expert on the people engagement side of technical project management. Dr. Patrick is a Certified Professional Facilitator who can collaborate with you to plan, prepare, and execute engagements that are productive and rewarding experiences for all concerned. Dr. Patrick also provides training, consulting, and keynotes on facilitation, teamwork, collaboration, creativity, innovation, social intelligence, change management, and thriving on a steep learning curve. Contact Dr. Patrick (valerie.patrick@fulcrumconnection.com or text 412-742-9675) to set up an exploratory call. Ask about the new Performance Acceleration Package for technical teams.

Listen to the interview with Dr. Baruch Fischhoff, in Episode 11 of “Science of Success: Social Secrets” podcast here:

<http://scienceofsuccess.libsyn.com/podcast>. Also available on iTunes and Stitcher Radio and all comments are welcome and encouraged!

Also see the companion blog post about using a team to write effectively about technical topics here: <http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/write-technical-topics-effectively/>.

About Fulcrum Connection LLC

Fulcrum Connection specializes in instructional design, training, speaking, facilitation and consulting to develop skills in leadership, innovation, sustainability, troubleshooting teamwork, and managing technical professionals.