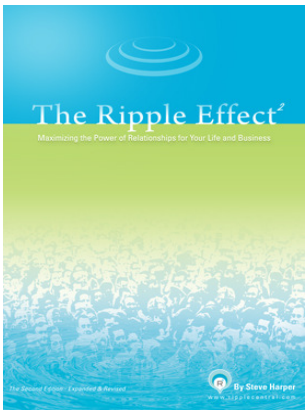
Dental WEALTH Builder
By Dr Bhavna Doshi

The Ripple Effect

Maximizing the Power of Relationships for Your Life and Business – Revised and Expanded Second Edition



Author: Steve Harper
Copyright: 2005, 2010 by Steve Harper
Adapted by permission of SWOT Publishing
ISBN 978-0-9768665-0-3
221 pages

■ The Big Idea

Steve Harper emphasizes the importance of leaving a legacy characterized not by professional accomplishments or the amassing of wealth, but by how one affects the lives of others. This impact is the Ripple Effect, which creates ripples similar to those from a stone thrown into a pond.

1. Everyone is in a constant state of networking, whether formally or through casual conversation. Seek new contacts, show genuine interest in their goals, and be of service to one's colleagues and community.

2. The Internet affords many opportunities to learn and network. Approach online social networking with the same tact and professionalism that one would in person, and remember that the Internet has a long memory.

3. In hard economic times and during career transitions, understand that networking becomes even more critical. However, do not wait for that to happen; build a network and maintain friendships regardless of one's profession or personal situation.

4. In order to move from apathy to unconscious competence in relationship-building, understand the importance of networks, plan wisely, follow through, and review critically.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

Features of the Book

Reading Time: 8 hours, 221 pages

In The Ripple Effect, author Steve Harper provides an inspirational description of his approach to building and maintaining long-term relationships—an approach which he maintains also incidentally leads to business success in unexpected and surprising ways. This revised and expanded second edition includes a discussion of networking during tough economic times, as well as practical tips for using electronic social media.

Both experienced and novice networkers can benefit from his enthusiasm and practical tips. Each chapter concludes with summaries of major points as well as activities for putting the lessons into practice, and real-life narratives and personal stories are scattered throughout. There may be some benefit to reading the book from cover to cover, but many of the chapters and stories, particularly in the last section, may easily be read out-of-sequence.

INTRODUCTION

In **The Ripple Effect**, author Steve Harper draws from his experience as a businessman and a speaker to describe the power of relationships to transform both personal and professional lives. His networking theory, which he calls “the Ripple Effect,” focuses on building and tending relationships as the foundation not only for a meaningful and satisfying life, but also for professional success. Harper’s inspirational message is that selflessly sharing one’s time, talent, and expertise creates a life filled with myriad unforeseen possibilities. This second revised and expanded edition includes new tips which utilize emerging social media to put “rippling” into motion.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP MINDSET

Harper first discusses why he believes the practice of deliberately building relationships is so vitally important. He reflects on the impact of specific events and relationships on his own life, encouraging his readers do the same, and recommends taking inventory of one's personality traits, knowledge, and resources.

Developing a solid personal and professional reputation in the community provides a foundation on which more meaningful connections can be built. Harper suggests that doing business fairly and with attention to detail will speak for itself; customers and the community will create positive ripples at present and in the future. He emphasizes the importance of understanding human nature's tendency to remember and speak out more often about negative customer experiences than positive ones. The practical implication of this tendency is the importance of consistent service and of creating products of good quality.

Harper believes in the law of reciprocity, and particularly in the power of referrals and positive interpersonal energy. He points out that relationships do not develop by accident; reciprocity does not happen without an action to begin the exchange. Though charity should be shown freely and without the promise of return, people often feel compelled to invest back into a charitable business or cause after someone has made an initial investment.

In order to create a plan for networking, Harper outlines his four stages for developing any new skill. These stages serve as a guideline and may vary in each individual and scenario. The four stages are as follows:

Stage 1: *Unconscious Incompetence*. In this stage, the practitioner is "blissfully ignorant." Their skill is underdeveloped, they are unaware that their skill should be improved, and they are unaware of their skill level.

Stage 2: *Conscious Incompetence*. The practitioner has become aware that a particular skill should be learned, as well as of their own inadequacy. Although discouraging, awareness and desire to learn are important.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

Stage 3: *Conscious Competence*. A skill has been acquired following a commitment of time and energy, but the practitioner is still unable to perform without conscious and constant effort.

Stage 4: *Unconscious Competence*. The skill has become habit and is performed without concentration or even awareness. The practitioner no longer needs to memorize a process or a formula, and the skill has become a part of daily living.

Harper's goal is to help readers attain a skill level equivalent to Stage 4, the level of Unconscious Competence, for building and maintaining relationships. Reaching this level involves developing an appreciation for the personalities and learning styles of others. He suggests that there are three dominant personalities: Mavens, Connectors, and Persuaders. Each personality offers invaluable strengths. Although anyone may have traits of all three, one of the personalities will be most dominant in any given individual. Teams may also reflect these traits, and dynamic teams which solve problems thoroughly and creatively comprise elements of all three personalities.

Mavens are generally driven by a desire for knowledge, whatever the subject or industry. Detail-oriented and logical, they often need to communicate in a way that better accommodates their audience. Connectors seek to understand other people and develop relationships. They benefit from help maintaining focus so that they work toward a specific goal. Persuaders are 'evangelists' for a cause. Action-driven, persuaders sometimes need reminders that relationships are valuable in themselves, and are not merely a means to an end.

To forge these trans-talent relationships, individuals must be honest about the ways they perform most comfortably and effectively. Frustration will ensue if people try to be something they are not. Harper advises readers to challenge as well as complement each other when forming groups.

Maintaining energy and force requires transparency, honest communication, and a shared, significant goal. Harper challenges readers to push the boundaries of comfort, invite others to teach and critique, and exercise discipline in developing areas of weakness. Appreciating the dynamics of others and believing in the principles of the 'Ripple Effect' is necessary for the change which he hopes to create in the lives of his readers.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

PLANNING A RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY

In order to build the most effective team, or to learn how to work more effectively within a team, Harper suggests that readers maintain awareness of their own personalities as well as the potential obstacles to successful relationships implicit within their own tendencies. He recommends that mavens learn how to fit their knowledge into a framework that others can understand and use effectively. Connectors, oftentimes natural networkers, must avoid the temptation to pursue social gratification alone. Persuaders must learn to appreciate people as individuals and how to turn their controversial tendencies into a benefit to everyone in the room.

Formal and informal networking events can bring together a cross-section of individuals who share common values and goals, and Harper advocates the practice of formal networking, despite the negative stereotypes often associated with it. While acknowledging that many professionals exploit the practice, and even blatantly manipulate others, he emphasizes the importance of connecting with others in order to achieve personal goals and help others realize theirs.

Attending networking events or meeting new people does not guarantee immediate results. The idea is for readers to place themselves into situations which expose them to new knowledge and where people will benefit most from their presence. In order to get the most out of each event, Harper cautions against 'Negative Networkers,' who contribute to the bad stereotype, and thwart the feeling of comradeship and respect necessary to make a networking event successful. The following are characteristics of Negative Networkers:

- *Driven by a 'leads' mentality rather than by referrals*. A referral indicates a consensual pairing of one's own reputation with another. Leads are noncommittal and arbitrary, i.e. someone who *might* be interested in another's services.*See all people, events and issues as means to their own ends*. They want immediate results instead of diligently cultivating values and resources.

- *Talk more than they listen*. They monopolize conversations and faithfully redirect attention to their own objectives.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

- *Focus on themselves, and are disinterested in others, unless a false concern will benefit them in the end*. After gathering helpful information, they feign respect for the opinions of others and move on, even claiming those ideas for themselves.

Networking properly and compassionately restores professional relationship building to its rightful status. Networking with depth not only restores dignity to the process, but also the opportunities and friendships it is bound to produce.

To avoid negative experiences and to make the most of every networking situation, Harper suggests first to develop a clear understanding of the purpose of attending an event or meeting. This requires one to identify whom they wish to meet, and getting to the point when one does meet them. Second, it is important to listen more and talk less, keeping in mind how shared purposes can be served in the exchange. Meeting new contacts in the company of a shared friend can eliminate a great deal of the formality and awkwardness of first introductions and help develop an immediate rapport. Overlapping personal and professional relationships is beneficial, and sincere interest cannot be faked. Finally, he reminds readers to follow up on new relationships rather than permitting the connection to lapse after the first meeting.

Cultivating friendships after the first few meetings and take relationships to progressively deeper levels requires:

- Categorizing the new relationship. This does not mean to pigeonhole or label, but to set some initial boundaries, taking into consideration the individual's personality and situation. Tact and professionalism is important to determine the relationship's direction.

- Deciding whether the relationship is worth pursuing, and at what level. Any new friend should be respectful and appreciative of the other's time. A common regard for one another, as well as shared goals, guarantees a profitable connection.

- Establishing trust before seeking specifics. People may be turned off when the boundaries of social guidelines are violated. Time must pass when cultivating depth and meaning in a relationship.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

- Following up deliberately with desired professional relationships. Give others the benefit of the doubt if they do not seem as dedicated to the relationship, and permit them opportunities to reciprocate.

- Providing more time and attention to the most valuable clients. According to Harper, 20 percent of a company's client base generally creates 80 percent of its revenue, and time and resources should be invested in those relationships proportionately. Although often a casual note or meeting is all that is required to keep a relationship going, professionals should be prepared to work harder for those who benefit their company the most.

To illustrate the power of the Ripple Effect, Harper cites a study by psychologist Stanley Milgram involving a sample group of 160 people in Omaha, Nebraska. The group was given the task of mailing a packet of information to a stockbroker in Boston which had to be accomplished indirectly, through any number of contacts. The various journeys which the packages travelled were later studied, and based on the average of exchanges, Milgram proposed that there are only fix or six degrees of separation between any two people. Harper emphasizes the implication this has for the potential to create community and develop business.

The impact of networking has been multiplied exponentially in recent years by the resources available through the worldwide web.

Networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter serve functions far beyond those that are merely social. For example, with 250 million users on Facebook alone, these tools are changing the way news is breaking. The instantaneous nature of these applications often competes with the traditional news networks, and some have even argued that they provide greater accuracy.

Employers may also benefit greatly from these tools when searching for potential employees, learning information about applicants that would never be shared in a formal resume or interview. A survey on Careerbuilder.com found that about 45 percent of employers search social sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace and Twitter for information about their candidates. Frequently, what they found on these sites alone was enough to persuade them to dismiss an applicant. Top offenses included provocative photographs, indulgence in alcohol or drugs, misinformation about their work history, gossiping about previous employers, and bad spelling and grammar skills.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

Electronic networks provide an excellent means for business owners to learn how the public truly feels about their offerings. Customers can usually be trusted to vocalize their concerns, and if companies can create viable solutions as a result of this transparent feedback they can better tailor their services and products to the needs of their patrons.

Whether or not they are jobseekers, Harper cautions readers to be very cautious about their online postings because of the ease of finding information online. He advises tact and privacy for others, whether publishing political articles or writing about yesterday's breakfast. His rule of thumb for publishing personal posts is this: if readers can show their content to someone with the sensibility of their grandmother, they can feel confident in sharing it. Some may feel comfortable disclosing their professional and personal information interchangeably; this is a personal choice to be handled individually.

Readers should be guided ultimately by their common sense, networking online as skillfully and tactfully as they would in person. Harper advocates educating oneself about any and all tools available for the purpose of connecting with others, and producing positive Ripples whatever the means or method.

Networking in difficult economic times can be particularly important. Exercising etiquette and discretion and putting others first requires extra discipline and effort when one is desperate for work. Harper suggests remembering that no matter one's personal situation, there is always someone else in more dire straits. Connecting with others is a continuous process, and a moment of haste or desperation may affect the possibility of a future relationship.

According to a recent study, new college graduates will change jobs an average of ten to fifteen times. The research indicates that many open jobs are never advertised, and more than half are filled because the applicant knows someone within the company. In spite of these staggering numbers, some individuals enjoying professional stability do not see the immediate need to network, either because of the nature of their job, or their perceived job security. Because employment and personal situations can change overnight, Harper counsels readers to develop their network and reputation at all times. Building relationships does not happen only in specifically ordained events, and conversations with people in any number of circumstances may prove beneficial. Moreover, practice builds confidence and skill in conversation, helping achieve the goal of unconscious competence.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

Those who are desperate for work may find it difficult to remember that strangers do not necessarily care if they are unemployed. It is advisable to avoid networking with the overt purpose of getting a job. Being honest about one's capabilities, dispassionate about employment status, and expressing a genuine interest in others remains the best course of action. Harper cautions against creating business cards reflecting only personal contact information, or immediately adding new 'friends' on Facebook after an event.

Connections which have been nourished by years of stability and reciprocity will prove fruitful when faced with economic hardship. Ideally, each person enjoys at least five of these close friendships, called 'lifelines,' with those whom can be implicitly trusted. It is important to tell these individuals how much they are respected and how greatly their time and attention is appreciated. In addition, mutual trust should be established early on by being truthful and committed in every situation. Finally, it is important to remember that deep friendships require time to develop, and that these friends deserve great care and attention.

PRACTICING RELATIONSHIPS

Finally, Harper instructs how to take relationships such as these lifelines to the next and final level, establishing the intimacy and skill level previously described as 'unconscious competence.' At this point, networking and relationship building become habit, are practiced frequently and with sincerity, and no longer require conscious effort. Interestingly, graciousness, empathy, and being selfless in caring for others is also the most self-serving thing one can do. Even though favors should not be granted for the express purpose of getting something in return, acts of kindness will infuse the community with a positive energy which will, in due course, return to its origin.

He provides a relationship model consisting of six levels to help readers determine where they are in their relationships and how to move forward with their connections. Although objectivity is difficult in romantic relationships, professional relationships are usually easier to map, and the principles of the model apply on a larger scale to business relationships.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

At level one, there is a general awareness of another person which may or may not include any communication. At the second level, there is a basic rapport with one another; they are acquaintances, and at some level, know they can depend on each other. At level three, each may be confident in calling the other a friend and in trusting them to attend to personal matters. They have developed vulnerability, and know what motivates and inspires the other. At the fourth level, ancillary, or additional trust, has been established. Each person unconsciously looks out for the other, and seeks opportunities to strengthen their bond. Levels five and six indicate total trust and intimacy, an achievement which most people will enjoy only a few times in their lifetime. This bond is designated for lifelong friends and family who often know each other better than they know themselves.

To practice relationships, Harper encourages readers to gather information and communicate with contacts using all the tools available in today's technology-linked world. However, this presents a variety of challenges.

Although information is more abundant and accessible than ever, verifying its accuracy is frequently difficult. Which alleged facts are in reality rumors, exaggerations, or falsehoods? Moreover, similar to currency, the value of information is lost if it is not shared.

One obvious commercial use for the channels created through networking is advertising and marketing. Every marketing team has 'top of mind association' as its objective, striving to be customers' first image in relationship to their service or product, and countless resources and energy are spent on that goal. However, Harper points out that advertising creates frequency of contact, not quality. Just as in personal relationships, time is well spent in prioritizing business relationships with clients, and in using technology, money and resources creatively.

He states that the question that should really energize professionals, and drive all marketing strategies, is: "Why should I do business with you instead of one of your competitors?" Although someone else may offer cheaper prices, more valuable products, or better service, business owners can offer their customers one thing that no one else can: themselves. Harper believes that the personal interaction between a company and its prospective clients is far more important than the quality of its service or product, and emphasizes that professionals should focus on the quality of these relationships alongside the development of their business. Everything that is unique to them, including their experience, networks, and character, can work to the advantage of their patrons. Clearly communicating this value and mobilizing those resources on the customer's behalf is what will win the account. This is the ultimate product of a relationship-first strategy.

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.

Relationships with vendors and suppliers are absolutely essential because these people deal directly with the products sold and heavily impact the public credibility of the company. Maintaining respect and efficiency with vendors will ripple into the process of delivery to customers, who seek quality in every exchange. Many unnecessary problems may be avoided by taking care of suppliers, and benefits and opportunities may be offered to the business as a result.

Additionally, employers' treatment of their employees will greatly influence the service provided to customers as well as a number of other factors. Mismanagement directly affects company morale, the work atmosphere, and in the end, the customer's experience. No matter how talented and committed a team may be, the development and leadership of that team is vital.

In conclusion, Harper suggests that growing businesses as well as personal relationships require a conscious, patient effort to develop. Small things, such as helping at least one person per day, will accumulate and will serve relationships greatly in the long run. He advises coming in early or staying late at work at least three times per week, not for the sole purpose of getting ahead on one's work, but also to cultivate a work environment which reflects commitment, and encourages the practice of complimenting friends and family at least once every day. His general counsel: nurture gratitude and generosity in everyday life.

***

© 2010 BestSummaries.com

Published by BusinessSummaries, 7891 W Flagler St, # 346 Miami Florida, 33144
© 2010 BusinessSummaries. All rights reserved. No part of this summary may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, or otherwise, without prior notice of BusinessSummaries.com.