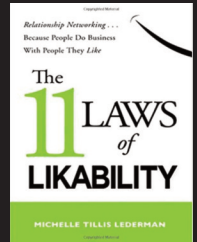


# The 11 Laws of Likability

## Relationship Networking...Because People Do Business with People They Like



Book by Michelle Tillis Lederman

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## Synopsis

Are you confident in your ability to network? Do you approach networking strategically and with a clear goal in mind? If so, you're doing it wrong! To be an expert networker, you need people to *like you*. The key to increasing your likability is contained in 11 simple, powerful laws designed to equip you with the skills to network with success.

**The 11 Laws of Likability** (AMACOM, © 2012) teaches you how to create and sustain working relationships, grounded in a mutual liking for one another.

Author Lederman presents a plain language guide that teaches you how to network like a professional. The author presents 11 laws on how to be likable, how to like yourself, and how to like the people you converse with. The book outlines laws to follow before, during, and after a conversation. It includes activities, real-life examples, and self-assessment quizzes, to steer you on a course towards successful relationship networking.

The key concepts of *The 11 Laws of Likability* can be distilled into the following approaches:

### Focus on the Other Party, Rather than Yourself

Don't focus on preparing yourself for the networking conversation. Instead, turn your focus to the other party in the conversation.

### Focus on Friendliness, Rather than Formality

Don't focus on using business-like language and actions when networking. Rather focus on being *friendly* towards the other party, who would rather communicate with a fellow human being than a corporate robot.

### Focus on the Relationship, Rather than a Goal

During the conversation, people tend to focus on achieving a goal, such as getting the other party to sign a contract. Instead of focusing on the goal, focus on *building a relationship* with the other party in the conversation.

### Choose Your Perceptions

Don't judge others by your first impression of them. Get to know the "true them" and build a relationship based on trust.



“...Building relationships is not about transactions—it's about connections. It is about creating opportunities for honest and authentic interactions, and making them advantageous for all parties involved. It's about liking and being liked.”

Based on *The 11 Laws of Likability: Relationship Networking...Because People Do Business with People They Like* by Michelle T. Lederman, we discuss how you can take your networking prowess to the next level. The author presents 11 laws of likability. We share our interpretations of these laws in the following pages.

## Before the Conversation

According to Lederman, your attitude has a bearing on how the person you're conversing with perceives you. To make a good impression, ensure that you enter the conversation with a positive attitude. Cast aside any negative assumptions you might have about the networking situation. The more aware you are about your mood, the easier it is to give a true account of yourself. The laws of authenticity, self-image, perception, and energy help you convey what is genuine about you, so as to gain the other party's trust.

### Law of Authenticity

You're being authentic when you're being your *true self*. Rather than acting out a role, you should let the other party get to know the "real you." When networking, it's easy to fall into the trap of using formal language ("May I have a minute of your time?") and having prepared questions and answers. But according to the author, you're better off conversing in a manner that feels natural to you. The most effective way to bring your likability to the fore is to simply be yourself. This makes it easier to engage in conversation with the other party. After all, you're not constantly rehearsing what you're saying in your mind. You're fully present in the now.

To be your authentic self, ensure that the networking environment feels right for you. And be certain you truly *want* to network with the other party in the conversation. For example, if you pursue a business opportunity that doesn't align with your company goals, you'll struggle to present your authentic self to the other party, because the truth is you don't *want* to be having the networking conversation. But if you genuinely care about conversing with the other party, it's more likely that you'll form a lasting relationship with him or her.

### Law of Self-Image

Before you can expect the other party to like you, it's vital that *you like yourself*. The author emphasizes the importance of confidence when networking. Focus on your knowledge, skills, and strengths. While you should be aware of your weaknesses (for example, perhaps you get nervous around others), try not to be too hard on yourself. Having a positive self-image enables you to converse with confidence.

To improve your self-image, the author advises you to motivate yourself. According to research, telling yourself you can do something is a proven way to increase your chances of success. If you begin to doubt yourself, remind yourself of what you've sacrificed to get to where you are today. Think of what you've accomplished *already*! This can be something big, such as your university degree, or it can be something as small as the harsh weather you braved to get to the networking location. Lederman advocates the approach of "faking it until you make it real." She explains that if you imagine you've already achieved your goal, you'll become accustomed to the positive thinking required to achieve it in real life.

## Law of Perception

Perception may be subjective, but it forms your “reality” of another person. This is also true for the other person's reality of you, so it's vital that you make a good first impression on him or her. First impressions often shape how you're perceived for the duration of your relationship. If you make a bad first impression, you'll struggle to improve the other party's perception of you later on. To make a good impression, determine your dominant communication style.

Lederman distinguishes between four styles:

- **Straight Line:** During a conversation, you make decisions quickly, based on facts and figures (objective).
- **Zig Zag:** You make decisions quickly, but based on your intuition (subjective). So, how you *feel* towards the other person impacts your decision.
- **Angle:** During a conversation, you take your time to make objective decisions. So you consider the facts in the conversation carefully.
- **Circle:** You take your time to make subjective decisions. For example, you might carefully consider how you feel about the other person's approach to management.

Once you've determined your dominant style, identify the other party's style using your powers of observation. If your communication styles differ, consider how this might impact how you interact with the other party. For instance, if you have an Angle style and the other person has a Circle style, avoid mentioning facts and figures; instead, focus on your feelings towards the topic of conversation.

## Law of Energy

It's vital that you become aware of how you're acting and feeling. To get a constructive networking outcome, you need to ensure that the networking situation is full of positive energy. According to the author, if you give off positive energy during a conversation, you'll receive positive energy from the other party in return. The energy you transmit is influenced by your feelings and actions. So, ensure that you feel positive about the conversation topic, and be prepared to express your enthusiasm during the conversation using positive body language. Also, be prepared for any negative energy you may receive from the other party. You could counter any pessimism by showing the other person what he or she stands to gain from establishing a relationship with you.

## During the Conversation

The author emphasizes that whenever the opportunity to network presents itself, you should take it. Engaging in conversation can lead to the forging of new relationships, which in turn can lead to career advancement. If

you're just starting your career, the laws of curiosity, listening, similarity, and mood memory can make initiating a conversation significantly less daunting. These laws also apply if you're well into your career, however; they can help you stimulate the conversation skills you haven't exercised in a while.

### Law of Curiosity

Starting a conversation with a stranger can be awkward. According to Lederman, showing interest in the other party is a smart way to start and maintain a conversation. The author advises you to use open-ended questions, which leave room for the conversation to grow. For instance, you can ask someone about his or her hobbies or interests. Then use the response to "grow the conversation." So, if you've asked a prospective employer whether he played football at college, you can follow up by telling him how football taught you that hard work pays off. By starting with an open-ended question (such as the employer's opinion on a non-controversial issue), and sharing some of your personal experiences, you allow your authentic self to shine through.

### Law of Listening

If you want to understand the other party, you need to listen *attentively* to what he or she is saying. According to the author, listening is an active activity, not a passive one. Active listening requires your energy and focus. Instead of focusing only on what you want to hear, listen for an understanding of what the other party is actually saying.

According to Lederman, you can listen at three different levels.

- **Inward Listening:** You take in what the other party says and respond with your own perspective on what he or she has said. For example, if the other party complains about how inflation is adversely affecting her business, tell her that you can relate and give an example of how your business expenses are also rising. She is more likely to trust you when she can relate to your experiences.
- **Outward Listening:** You take in what the other party says, and ask him or her more about it. For example, if he says he loves to travel, ask him which countries he has visited. He will appreciate that you've shown an interest in him.
- **Listening Intuitively:** You observe the other party's use of visual communication, such as facial expressions and hand gestures. This gives you a better understanding of what the other party means by what he or she says.

The level at which you should listen varies from situation to situation. As a general rule, you should aim for a healthy combination of all three levels during the networking conversation.

## Law of Similarity

People like people who are like (or similar to) them. Try to find things you and the other party have in common. Examples include shared beliefs, educational backgrounds, or the places you've both visited. Such similarities form part of the foundation for new relationships.

In a typical networking situation, the other party seeks to validate his or her opinion of you by consulting with someone he or she trusts. This leads to the sub-law of similarity—the law of association, in which people trust a source that they know. For example, before hiring a candidate, an employer usually checks the candidate's references. If the candidate has listed a reference that the employer trusts, the employer is likely to trust the candidate by association. So, during the networking conversation, refer to someone the other party knows and trusts (that is, a mutual acquaintance). Doing so increases the likelihood that the other party will trust *you*. Reinforce this trust by showing the other party how comfortable you feel communicating with him or her. You can do this by making the odd joke or by smiling every so often.

## Law of Mood Memory

It's vital that you end the conversation on a positive note. According to the author, the other party is more likely to remember the positive (or negative) feeling you leave him or her with than what you've said. In other words, *how* you communicate with other people leaves a longer-lasting impression than *what* you communicate to them. Your task is to leave them feeling positive about building a relationship with you. This feeling is what Lederman refers to as "mood memory." To create positive mood memory, let other people know what you admire about them. Doing so makes them feel valued. Or you can ask the other party for advice. Doing so lets him or her see your humility.

Once you've created a positive mood memory, you need to create an exit strategy. If possible, put the ball in the other party's court by giving him or her the option to continue or exit the conversation. For example, if you're at a conference or workshop, you can say, "I wanted to check out the buffet. Would you like to join me?" At the very end of the conversation, use positive words (for example, "I look forward to seeing you again soon") and body language (such as a friendly smile).

## After the Conversation

According to Lederman, once you've had a conversation and the other party has developed a liking for you, it's vital that you *maintain contact* with him or her. Your relationship won't grow if you become complacent. Even if you feel you have nothing new to offer the other party, you should still send him or her a follow-up message. By following the laws of familiarity, giving, and patience, you'll leave a lasting impression on the other party, offer value to him or her, and understand the importance of persevering with a relationship.

## Law of Familiarity

Creating mental and physical familiarity increases your likability. The other party's comfort with and trust in you increases every time he or she sees you or hears your name. The author emphasizes the importance of using appropriate social networking sites to interact with the other party after your initial conversation is over. You should use LinkedIn for professional correspondence (for example, sharing professional contacts), Twitter for staying up to date with trends in your industry (for example, by reading tweets by the other party's company), and Facebook (for less formal matters). So, for example, if the other party has recently got engaged, congratulate him or her via a Facebook message. People value the fact that you're thinking of them. But don't use Twitter to set up that important interview!

## Law of Giving

One of the best ways to increase your likability is to recognize the needs of others and attempt to satisfy them. According to Lederman, a positive cycle of giving leads to a mutually beneficial relationship. Always ask yourself, "What can I do to help the other party?" The author explains that although the benefits of giving might not always be crystal clear, ultimately your generosity won't go unnoticed by the other party. Make other people feel that you understand their needs and are willing to satisfy them. Examples of giving freely include creating opportunities for the other party to network with other people, inviting the other party to events, and sharing advice and resources with them. And if the other party does something nice for you, ensure that you return the favor.

## Law of Patience

The saying "Patience is its own reward" certainly holds true for networking conversations. According to the author, if you're impatient with the other party, you'll come across as demanding or desperate, which aren't likable qualities at all. To establish a meaningful relationship with the other party, you need to give the relationship sufficient time to evolve. If, after the conversation, the other party is reluctant to go ahead with your agreed plan of action, be patient with him or her and continue to look for ways to satisfy his or her needs. Even if the other party's hesitancy costs you in the short term (for example, you've turned down work from an existing smaller client in order to obtain more lucrative work from the other party), focus on the value created by forming a lasting relationship with him or her.

## Insights—Become an Expert Networker

### Look for the Good in Others

Insincerity is easy to spot. If you genuinely dislike the person you're conversing with, don't fake positivity (for example, by forcing a smile). Instead, focus on the other person's positive attributes. Try to identify qualities in them that you can admire or appreciate.

### Remind Yourself of Your Successes

To improve your self-image, you should keep a "success file." For instance, each time you receive an encouraging e-mail congratulating you on a job well done, print the e-mail out and store it in the file. Then, when you feel discouraged, you can refer to the e-mails, certificates, and so on, which serve as proof that you *can* do it.

### Use the Internet to Your Advantage

Being prepared for your interactions is crucial. Make use of the Web to obtain background information on the other party in the conversation. For example, look up information on the other person's company, as well as where he or she attended university. Ensure that you have enough information to sustain a fruitful conversation. But don't invade people's privacy.

### Write Down Your Thoughts

If you struggle to remember everything you need to say during networking conversations, write down the main topics you plan on discussing ("My education," "Their interests," "Our love of animals"). Refer to the note on a regular basis, especially on the day of the conversation.

### Eliminate Negativity

Creating a negative mood memory reduces the likelihood of the other party wanting to converse with you again. Make a list of the things other people do that irritate you (for example, when people use their cell phones while conversing with you). Then consider what *you* do to possibly irk others. Focus on removing such negative habits from your behavior.



## Conclusion

According to Lederman (and contrary to popular belief!), the key to networking isn't strategy, but likability. Drawing on years of personal experience, the author masterfully tutors you in the art of professional networking. *The 11 Laws of Likability* is a must-read if you want to explore how to allow your congeniality to shine through during networking conversations.

“What makes each of us likable is distinct to us. But the basic drivers of likability are the same for us all. I call them the 11 laws of likability. This book takes an in-depth look at each of these ‘laws,’ breaking them down to find out how they function in both business and social settings, and how to fully incorporate them into our lives.”

If you've enjoyed our insights on Lederman's *The 11 Laws of Likability: Relationship Networking...Because People Do Business with People They Like*, we encourage you to access the other *The 11 Laws of Likability* assets in the Skillsoft library, or purchase the hardcopy.

## About the Author



**MICHELLE T. LEDERMAN** is a highly sought-after keynote speaker, corporate trainer, and executive coach. As founder and CEO of Executive Essentials, she has delivered seminars for Fortune 500 companies, non-profits, and universities, and has appeared on CBS, NBC, NPR, and Fox. Lederman has also been featured in publications including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *US News*, and *World Report*. She spent a decade in finance holding roles in M&A, venture capital, financial consulting, hedge fund investing, and risk management. A former adjunct professor at NYU Stern School of Business, she is a graduate of Lehigh University and Columbia Business School.

### Also by Michelle T. Lederman

- 1 *Nail the Interview, Land the Job: A Step-by-Step Guide for What to Do Before, During and After the Interview*, Shorti Press, © 2015, ISBN 978-0996507806.
- 2 *Heroes Get Hired: How to Use Your Military Experience to Master the Interview*, NBC Publishing, © 2013, ASIN B00B02TJEK.