

How to Win Friends and Influence Students: Applying Networking Principles to the Teacher-Student Relationship

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The purpose of this paper is to explore methods that enrich the teacher-student relationship. In particular, the focus is on applied strategies to improve the relationship between teachers and their students to enhance and improve student learning. Dale Carnegie, the preeminent writer on interpersonal relations, provides the framework for the discussion. The paper moves quickly from the theoretical to practical time-tested tools that can be immediately applied by teachers. Strategies discussed include: welcome messages, conversation stack, one-to-ones, learning names, giving feedback, thank-you notes, office etiquette, and post-graduation networking. The paper provides specific methods for application of these strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Dale Carnegie's book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" (1981) is a worldwide best seller. Countless business people have read the book and have taken the Dale Carnegie Course. It gives them the not so secret techniques of how to get along with other people. Our goal is to apply these principles and provide practice tips to enhance the teacher-student relationship in the university setting. If you believe that you can catch more flies with honey, then this information will be of use to you.

No doubt you are already employing one or more of these strategies to enhance your relationship with your students. In fact, "the educational value of faculty-student interaction outside the classroom is among the oldest and most widespread beliefs in American higher education" (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Lutovsky Quaye, 2010, p. 767). We are suggesting that you turn up the volume and use as many of these ideas as possible.

"Despite decades of research confirming the importance of such interactions, there remain considerable theoretical and practical limitations that interfere with institutional efforts to increase the quantity and quality of faculty interaction with students outside of class" (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Lutovsky Quaye, 2010, p. 768). Do not worry about giving too much praise. It is human nature to want to be liked; both students and teachers crave this positive attention.

Our basic premise is that students learn better when they like the teacher. Students tend to value “instructor’s enthusiasm, instructor’s respectfulness, instructor’s approachability, and instructor’s level of patience higher than faculty” (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 68). For example, our youngest son is a freshman at an excellent university. During his first semester he talked in glowing terms about three of his four professors. Surprisingly he could not recall the name of his math teacher. What he did remember is that he didn’t like the math teacher and didn’t think he was learning anything in the class. Connecting to students not only makes teaching a more enjoyable, but also helps students learn the material.

A study by William J. Lammers and Sheila M. Smith (2008) provides a brief snapshot of some of the research that has been done looking at the factors that affect learning (p. 61). In short, their study looked “to identify and understand the factors and variables perceived as important to the learning environment by exploring faculty and student perspectives” (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 68). Moreover, it is noted by Lammers and Smith (2008) that previous studies also found that students rated variables such as enthusiasm, personality, and helpfulness of the instructor as well as the instructor’s ability to notice and respond to questions from students as qualities related to superior teaching and learning [sources cited by Lammers and Smith include: Burdsal & Bardo, 1986; Buskist et al., 2002; McKeachie, 1979; Waters et al., 1988].

The results showed that students valued traits of the instructor including: enthusiasm, knowledge of subject matter, respectfulness, level of interest, approachability, ability to notice and respond to questions, level of patience, speaking style, ability to anticipate student’s difficulty in new concepts, control over the classroom (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). In contrast instructors tended to value their level of interest in the subject matter, their knowledge of the subject matter, their enthusiasm, their ability to notice/respond to questions, their use of examples, the student’s attitude, their sensitivity to student learning, student’s motivation, student’s attention level, their approachability (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66).

While many of the same personality traits of the instructor appear on both the student’s and instructor’s list of variables some helpful trends do emerge (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). Faculty members’ respect of students was ranked at #3 on the compiled list of student’s most important variables (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). However, faculty members’ respect of students was ranked much lower at #11 on the faculty list (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). Additionally, students ranked the speaking style of the instructor at relatively high #8, while faculty ranked their own speaking style as an almost irrelevant #32 in importance for student learning (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). It is helpful to point out that out of the ten least important variables for student learning BOTH faculty and students agreed on seven out of ten of the variables including: student marital status, age, attire, gender, classification as well as instructors attractiveness and gender (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66).

When considering our recommendations below regarding teaching methods please keep in mind that student learning is at the heart of the educational system. It does not matter if we have done “ground breaking” research and have an encyclopedic knowledge of our field of study if we cannot teach the material in an effective way to our students.

We propose that one way to improve our ability to teach is to improve our personal relationship with students. Obviously, maintaining academic rigor is paramount to any teacher; what we are suggesting is that outside of a lecture, instructors are able to connect with their students and enhance their learning without substantially changing the content and method of their classroom.

“In order to maximize learning, it is essential for teachers to develop a good relationship with their students, because rapport established between teachers and students, in part, determines the interest and performance level of students” (Doran-Morgan, 2011, p. 21). The recommendations below are meant to supplement the learning process by building a personal relationship between faculty members and their students.

SEND A WELCOME MESSAGE

In “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” Dale Carnegie (1981) included in his first nine human relations principles the recommendation: “Make the other person feel important – and do it sincerely.” Carnegie writes that adherence to this principle will, “Make people like you instantly” (Carnegie, 1981, p. 129).

To this end, consider sending an e-mail message to your students approximately one month before the semester starts. You might give a few details about the class to create excitement, you could talk about how much you look forward to teaching the class and offer any help that is needed. For example, “Good morning - I am looking forward to having you in my class this semester. We have some really interesting projects planned, such as a trip to the courthouse. If you need anything before the first day of class, please let me know. I can be reached at...”

This should be followed up by a second e-mail sent out just a few days before the start of class. This will ensure students who signed up late will still receive a greeting. Often students will respond with questions about the textbook, the syllabus and other logistics regarding the class; they might even say that they too are looking forward to the class.

Many practical difficulties can be avoided with this approach. Missing books, confusion about location, and other potential problems are noted well before the first day of class.

This practice certainly assists with the minutia necessary to conduct a class, but it is much more. Advance e-mail to students sends exactly the message that the student’s participation in the class is important. It signals they are the customers. They are important to the existence of the class and important personally to the instructor. Students feel like they “belong in” and are “essential to” the class before the class has even begun.

GET THEIR ATTENTION

Dale Carnegie (1981) advised us to “Talk in terms of the other person’s interests” (p. 128) and “Arouse in the other person an eager want” (p. 79). In this regard, it is essential to have a fundamental understanding as to why the course we are teaching is important to a student personally. Why is the course in the curriculum? What will the students gain, beyond credit toward a degree or certificate, by taking the course? Why are we devoting part of our professional lives in becoming qualified to teach and teaching this particular course?

Once you have this understanding it is critical to communicate this to the students. Part of building rapport is to grab the attention of the student by making the course relevant to their lives. One of the effective ways of communicating the relevance of the material of the course is with a story that demonstrates the importance of the knowledge. It is most effective if that story is yours.

Dale Carnegie (1990) calls using an incident in our lives in a talk to persuade as part of the “magic formula.” The “Magic Formula” is quite simple: “Start your talk by giving us the details of your Example, an incident that graphically illustrates the main idea you wish to get across. Second, in the specific clear-cut terms give your Point, tell exactly what you want your audience to do; and third, give your Reason, that is, highlight the advantage or benefit to be gained by the listener when he does what you ask him to do” (Carnegie, 1990, p. 122).

For example, a business law course is important so that each person can understand their rights in the legal system as business owners, managers and citizens. To apply the Magic Formula to this concept we might convey this to our students something like this:

The Incident: “One of my client’s was a small contractor. He hired a worker to help on a project. To save money he classified him as an independent contractor, rather than an employee. Independent contractors do not have to be covered under worker’s compensation, employee’s do, so the contractor was saving this expense. Unfortunately the worker cut off two of his fingers with a saw while drinking gin out of a plastic cup. He filed a worker’s compensation claim against my client, the cost of which potentially

would put him into bankruptcy. If he had called an attorney before he made the decision to classify this worker as an independent contractor, this all could have been easily avoided.”

The Point: “If you engage and do the work of this class you will learn when it is time to call an attorney for legal advice.”

The Reason: “You will personally benefit in that you will be able to avoid such legal disasters.”

Relating the course to the student personally will grab their attention. Another part of this discussion should answer the questions, “What is your passion and why are you teaching this course?” For example, “I participated in student congress and debate while in high school. The next step I took was going to law school. When the chance to teach business law came along, it seemed like a perfect fit. I really love teaching and am happy that you are in my class.” If the students know you want to be there, then there is a greater likelihood that they want to be there too.

Active sharing of our passion is Stephen Covey’s (1990) first Habit of Highly Effective People: Be Proactive (pp. 67-94). There is a temptation to give in to cynicism, to complain about the students, our colleagues, the university, the computers, the classroom, etc. Our students react to our passion and our cynicism if we give in to it. Rather than react, we should proactively convey our passion.

Dale Carnegie’s (1981) first principle of human relations is “Don’t criticize, condemn or complain” (p. 46). Teachers deal with cynicism in students every day. Why give in to the attitude? Students are more and more aware of how much they are paying for each class. Even if your class is required, you should sell the students on its value to them from the beginning to get over the negativity.

INTRODUCTIONS ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

Many instructors miss an opportunity to build rapport with the students on the very first day of class. One simple and effective method is to shake hands with a personal introduction to each student as they arrive. Students of all ages resent being treated as children and as noted above being treated with respect is, for students, #3 on the most important variables for student learning (Lammers and Smith, 2008, p. 66). A positive typical business greeting dispels this at the beginning.

Do not underestimate the power of a smile and eye contact. Dale Carnegie (1981) once wrote, “Your smile is a messenger of your good will. Your smile brightens the lives of all who see it” (p. 102). A smile, good eye contact and a handshake set a positive tone.

The first day of class is a unique opportunity to “create an atmosphere that is open and positive and help students feel that they are valued member of a learning community” (Halawah, 2011, p. 380). An additional effective approach is to do a mini interview at the outset. Students can be prompted with the information they will need to provide by having the questions written on the board, projected on a screen and/or sent by prior e-mail.

The questions themselves should be non-threatening and non-judgmental general inquiries leading the students to talk about themselves. Typical appropriate questions include their name, hometown, major area of study, and interesting jobs they have held in the past.

The first few students may need prompts, but those that follow will know what you are looking for and will be ready. This method can be made to be even less “threatening” through the use of 3 x 5 cards.

This technique calls for cards to be distributed throughout the room. Each person gets one. Students are asked to write their name and answer questions in writing. After time sufficient to complete the project, ask them to please stand if they are done. After all are standing ask them to be seated, then call on the first few students and ask, “What did you write?”

With this method the student does not have to “think on their feet.” Performance anxiety is minimized. Further, the introverts in the class have the opportunity to think and write in a quiet environment before being asked to participate.

Again, smile and make eye contact throughout the exercise. Also, basic politeness adds an aura of welcoming professionalism. Say “please” and “thank you” during all the interactions.

CONVERSATION STACK

Dale Carnegie (1981) wrote: “Become genuinely interested in other people” as the principle that would result in people welcoming you and wanted to be in your presence (p. 94). The key to becoming a good conversationalist is to “Become a good listener. Encourage people to talk about themselves” (p. 123). To interest someone else it is necessary to “Talk in terms of the other person’s interest” (p. 128).

All these principles focus on asking question and listening to the answers. In fact, most modern sales approaches include asking questions to determine where the customer is in the context of where they could be if the product or services are purchased (the concept of selling “solutions” rather than products or services).

One of the best questioning techniques for networking is the Conversation Stack. A mind picture is used to help guide the student through a series of questions. These questions are designed to elicit information from fellow students (or anyone else for that matter). It is easy to use and takes a minimal amount of class time. It is also a very appropriate tool for an instructor to employ in a one on one interview with a student.

The teacher starts by helping students to visualize a picture of a mailbox with their name on it. In the back of the mailbox is an image of a house. In the front window of the house there is a child waving at them. Out of the chimney of the house is a leather work-glove as big as the house itself. This huge work-glove is holding an airplane. The airplane has spinning tennis rackets for propellers.

The best way to teach the Conversation Stack is to teach them this stack of connected mental pictures without explanation. Drill the class as a whole. Within a minute, they will be able to recite the pictures forwards and backwards. Then match them up with partners with the instruction that they should help each other memorize these pictures. Again, this takes mere minutes.

The key to memorization of the pictures is that each image is connected to the next image (for example, the house with a mail box, with a window, with a fireplace, etc.); the person memorizing the pictures is involved (for example, their name is on the mail box, the child is waving at them, etc.); and the pictures are exaggerated and silly (for example, the huge work-glove as big as a house and airplane with tennis rackets as propellers).

After the picture “stack” is memorized the questions that each picture represents are revealed. With each picture, the class is asked the question, “What question does the picture represent?” For example, the mailbox represents the question, “What is your name?” This is the first question to be asked in a conversation. This question is actually quite important in view of the difficulty people report in remembering other people’s names.

Behind the mailbox there is a house. The class is then asked, “What question does the house represent?” Obviously, it is “Where do you live?” Very quickly the class will understand where this is going.

In the front window of the house there is a child waving. The child represents family. Often students will suggest this image represents the question, “How many kids do you have?” or “Do you have children?” In some social and business settings referencing children specifically could be viewed as judgmental or aggressive, so we recommend using the general term “family” in the question represented by this picture. It is a good idea not to get too specific with your questions for this one. “Tell me about your family” or “Where is your family?” are more appropriate questions. These are very open-ended and give the person being asked options to choose what aspects of their family to discuss.

The house has a huge leather work-glove coming out of the chimney. The work-glove of course represents the person’s job and the question, “What work do you do?” The glove is holding an airplane. By now the students have gotten well into the rhythm of the exercise and will know that the plane represents travel. The questions here are “Do you like to travel?” or “Do you travel for work?” or “Where do you like to travel for fun?”

On the airplane image the propellers are made out of tennis rackets. The rackets represent hobbies, so the question becomes “What are your hobbies?” or “What do you like to do for fun when you are not working?”

Again, have the class work as partners to make sure they have memorized the questions that go with the images. This will take a minute or less. Then have them select which partner “will go first.” That person will ask the other partner the questions in the stack. Emphasize listening to the answers in addition to asking the question. Tell them they are free to ask follow up questions in any area that seems of interest. After a few minutes, ask them to stop and switch. The other partner will now be asking the questions.

These initial questions can be answered in a relatively short span of time. It is recommended that this exercise be scheduled several times during the first couple of weeks of class. You will find that your students get to know their classmates in a new and more meaningful way. You will also notice that you now have students who are willing to jump in during class discussion. The instructor should participate along with the students as well, modeling the correct use of this technique.

The positive results are amazing. Three of Dale Carnegie’s (1981) first nine human relations principle for winning friends involve asking questions and listening (pp. 94, 123, 128). The Conversation Stack is the simplest most effective practical application of these principles.

For smaller classes, there are advanced questioning techniques that can be employed. The questions in the basic Conversation Stack are fact question: “Who, What, Where, When” type questions. They are safe and non-threatening. Once this technique has been mastered the next level of questioning is the “Why” questions, otherwise known causative questions.

Actually asking “Why” a person is living in a particular place or doing a particular job can sound like you are demanding they justify their decision. A non-threatening way to ask the same question is to ask, “How did it come about that you took the job you are presently doing?” In essence, it is recommended to ask “Why” without using the word “Why.”

An even more personal and effective advance question is to ask what advice they would give to a young person about life, getting ahead in business, success, or happiness. This value-based question will result in amazing personal responses.

The causative and value-based questions are more personal questions that most people enjoy answering. Asking such questions results in an even stronger connection between the questioner and the answerer. Ironically, the person ends up feeling positive about the person that is merely asking questions. Dale Carnegie (1981) wrote, “Remember that the people you are talking to are a hundred times more interested in themselves and their wants and problems than they are in you and your problems” (p. 123).

The Conversation Stack is the practical application of these ideas and is useful to the students out in the real world as well as your classroom. Use of this technique builds rapport with and among your class and gives your students a valuable tool for later use. Students have reported that learning this technique was the most valuable thing they learned in their entire collegiate education.

ONE-TO-ONES

Another method to apply the Carnegie recommendation to make people feel important is to speak with them individually. The networking organization Business Networking International (BNI) was created by Ivan Misner in 1985 under the credo “Giver’s Gain” in 2004. Groups of business people are organized as “chapters” of the international organization and follow a very structured approach to networking that includes a weekly meeting. BNI reports that in 2012 its members passed 6.5 million referrals resulting in \$2.8 billion in business to its members (Business Networking International).

In addition to the weekly meeting, members are encouraged to engage in “One-to-Ones.” In its simplest form a “One-to-One” is simply a conversation in which you ask questions to find out how you can help the other person get ahead. In BNI the goal is to find out a way to refer them business, thus prompting them to refer business to you, resulting in “Giver’s Gain.”

With students the goal is similar. Asking students what they hope to attain in their education, why they are attending your class, and if there is anything you can do to help them demonstrates your interest in them and gives you a chance to provide mentorship and assistance. Helping “students find personal meaning and value in the material” can facilitate a student’s success in your class (Halawah, 2011, p.

379). Often it will be easy to assist students with their issues. Sometimes it will not, but it is impossible to know if you can help them without asking. The good news is that the instructor does not have to know all the answers. The teacher accomplishes both their human relations goal and the students desire to perform and overcome obstacles by asking questions, listening and asking follow up questions.

John Whitmore (2007) in "Coaching for Performance" focuses much of his coaching approach on asking questions, listening and asking follow up questions. Whitmore (2007) describes asking effective questions as the "The Heart of Coaching" (p. 46). Significantly, asking questions and listening is not just a tool to make the student like the instructor and feel important. Such questioning can be the key to coaching a student to higher levels of performance. The goal of questioning is to create "awareness" and "responsibility" (Whitmore, 2007, pp. 33-40).

The student can only control that with which they are aware. Forces about which they are ignorant, control the student (Whitmore, 2007, p. 33). According to Whitmore (2007):

"[Awareness] is the gathering and clear perception of the relevant facts and information and the ability to determine what is relevant. That ability will include an understanding of systems, of dynamics, or relationships between things and people and inevitably some understanding of psychology. Awareness also encompasses self-awareness, in particular recognizing when and how emotions or desires distort one's own perception" (p. 33).

Once the student is clearly aware of the challenges, goals, tasks that face them to achieve performance, that student's sense of self-responsibility is created:

"When we truly accept, choose or take responsibility for our thoughts and our actions, our commitment to them rises and so does our performance. When we are ordered to be responsible, told to be, expected to be or even given responsibility if we do not fully accept it performance does not rise. Sure, we may do the job because there is an implied threat if we do not, but doing something to avoid a threat does not optimize performance. To feel truly responsible invariably involves choice" (Whitmore, 2007, pp. 36-37).

The best questions are open-ended questions that require the student to think to answer. Open-ended questions are best from a human relations perspective, allowing the student to comfortably talk about what interests them (Carnegie, 1981, pp. 114-123). Open-ended questions lead to higher performance by leading to awareness and responsibility in the student:

"Open-ended questions requiring descriptive answers promote awareness, whereas closed questions are too absolute for accuracy, and yes or no answers close the door on the exploration of further detail. They do not even compel someone to engage their brain. Open questions are much more effective for generating awareness and responsibility in the coaching process" (Whitmore, 2007, pp. 46-47).

When you show interest in and assist students in this manner they will reciprocate, particularly if you ask them to help you. Professors "who care about their students are remembered, effect change, stimulate growth, and are more likely to be successful at teaching their students" (O'Brien, 2010, p. 110). Telling students it is important to you they fill out course evaluation forms, participate in department activities and that your classes be filled with their fellow students will yield positive results if you have assisted them first. They are more apt to accept special projects and assignments. The result will be that your students are more engaged and effective and "when students feel connected and supported in the classroom, they will be intrinsically motivated to join in the classroom activities". Motivation can therefore be enhanced when students have opportunities to build social relationships in the context of the classroom" (Halawah, 2011, p. 380). Therefore, you are doing them a favor helping them to like you.

LEARN NAMES AS FAST AS POSSIBLE

Dale Carnegie (1981) famously wrote: "A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language" (p. 113). Carnegie (1981) suggests, "We should be aware of the magic contained in a name and realize that this single item is wholly and completely owned by the person with whom we are dealing...and nobody else. The name sets the individual apart; it makes him or her unique among all others. The information we are imparting or the request we are making takes on a special

importance when we approach the situation with the name of the individual” (p. 112). Some folks have the ability to hear a person’s name and will remember it. For the rest of us there are tools that will assist us.

In addition to the first day introductions, teachers should request a short resume to be handed in on the second day of class. This information will help reinforce the student’s name and allow the teacher to get additional information about the student. Sometimes the knowledge of where the student is from or where they have worked can be woven into an example that illustrates the material. For example, “Derek is from Austin, Minnesota where Hormel is located. Hormel has had a very effective marketing campaign for SPAM which we are going to talk about today.”

The fundamental method for remembering names is repetition. Look at the person, ask for their name, repeat it, ask how it is spelled (if it is not obvious), and repeat it again. Practice the student’s names. Tell them you are trying to learn their names. Most people have trouble remembering names so it is possible to ask for a person’s name several times in an effort to remember that name without giving offense. Even with limited success your efforts will be appreciated.

Another tool is to create a mind picture regarding the person’s name. For example, the name of the co-author of this article is Pat Spott. You might imagine someone patting a spot on the ground. In addition to repetition, association with the name and a mental picture is remarkably effective.

There is also the tried and true method of using name cards. If you are in a lecture style classroom, this will only really help the instructor. Of course, if you are in a seminar style classroom it will also aid the other students who do not know their classmates.

GIVING FEEDBACK

Probably the most important Dale Carnegie (1981) principle is “Don’t criticize, condemn or complain” (p. 46). This might seem like a tough situation for a professor who has to give feedback and grade assignments and exams. In fact, we would actually be failing our students if we gloss over spelling errors, grammatical mistakes and poorly developed ideas. However, “instructors can give frequent, early, positive feedback that support’s students’ beliefs that they can do well,” this in turn can “encourage students to become self-motivated independent learners” (Halawah, 2011, p. 379).

Some suggestions when giving written feedback would be to employ a formula to make twice as many positive comments as negative ones. You might want to switch to purple ink when marking papers and exams. Oral feedback must be done with skill and tact. You should complement the student’s participation in class, even when they are completely off base. For example, “Emily – thank you for your answer. I was actually thinking of something different, but appreciate hearing your ideas.” You can let the student down gently and keep them interested in further class participation.

Right after “Don’t criticize, condemn or complain” is Dale Carnegie’s (1981) recommendation to “Give honest and sincere appreciation” (p. 60). He tells us: “Be ‘heartly in your approbation and lavish in your praise,’ and people will cherish your words and treasure them and repeat them over a lifetime-repeat them years after you have forgotten them” (Carnegie, 1981, p. 60).

Captain D. Michael Abrashof (2002) wrote of the power of praise in his book “It’s Your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy” and recommended building up his people rather than commanding through fear and intimidation: “I focused on building self-esteem. I know that most of us carry around an invisible backpack full of childhood insecurities, and that many sailors often struggled under the load of past insults, including being scorned at home or squashed at school. I could make the load either heavier or lighter, and the right choice was obvious. Instead of tearing people down to make them into robots, I tried to show them that I trusted and believed in them” (p. 141).

This focus on praise does not mean we do not hold our students accountable or give out high grades without performance. Captain Abrashof (2002) suggests frequent counseling and evaluation will do much to eliminate surprise at the final grade: “If they’re surprised [with their final grade], then clearly you have not done a good job of setting their expectations and providing feedback throughout the entire year” (p.

163-165). Students who know the expectations and are deficient will themselves know they are deficient and will look to themselves not the teacher.

The key word for praise is “sincere.” Look for a student’s strength or accomplishment and give praise. It costs nothing and can be quite powerful. At the same time our students must be held accountable for performance; we do not do anyone any favors giving an A for B work.

THANK YOU NOTES

Another time-tested technique of “giving honest and sincere appreciation” involves the written thank you note. It has long been customary to send a thank you note to someone who has helped or done a kindness. However, in today’s world of e-mails and texts the old-fashioned thank you note is neglected. Teachers should strongly consider writing paper thank you notes to students who have helped them in some way.

For example, a student asked a good question that advanced the class discussion or helped hand back homework. Your student assistant and the student workers in the department office should all receive thank you notes at some time during the semester. You should have thank you notes ready to go at all times. You might set a goal for the number of thank you notes that you will send during each week. Do not be stingy with your praise.

In “Dig Your Well Before You’re Thirsty” the first item on Harvey Mackay’s (1997) Top Ten List of the Best Ways to Stay in Touch with Your Network includes sending personal notes of thanks and congratulations (pp. 225-226). Mackay suggest setting up a calendar to do this systematically.

Students are not the teacher’s employees or children. Rather, they are the customers. They can be part of your network, recommending your classes and you to others. Rewarding their efforts with a cost free thank you note can make them part of your network.

Why limit this approach to students? You might also consider sending thank you notes to your colleagues and others at the university that help you out in some way. Do not leave off administrative, clerical or custodial personnel from your network. When the physician leaves the room of an anxious patient what does the patient do? Asks the nurse if the doctor is any good. The people around you can help you with your students. Give them a positive incentive to do so.

SET A NETWORKING BUDGET WITH YOUR OWN MONEY

When Captain Abrashof took over the guided missile destroyer USS Benfold it was underperforming in almost every category. When he finished his two-year tour the Benfold met and exceeded virtually every standard objective measure of performance. Interestingly, similar to the Lammers and Smith study, the sailors that were leaving the Navy at that time rated what they objectively received from their service (in their case their pay check) as being a distant fifth in their reasons for dissatisfaction. The top reason was not being treated with respect or dignity the third was that they were not being listened to (Abrashoff, 2002, p. 11-31).

Captain Abrashof had no more institutional resources than the Captain that had failed before him; yet, he made changes and succeeded. Don’t let your institution’s lack of resources or commitment limit your success as a teacher. As with Captain Abraham wrote, “Its Your Ship.”

This might be the most controversial recommendation. As we all know there are no line items in the department budget for schmoozing students. Do not let this limit you. Some of the little kindnesses you might do will cost money. For example, buying a bag of Halloween candy at Sam’s Club or treating your students to lunch at the local Chinese restaurant. Try not to think of it as you spending your money to help the university, but rather you making an investment in yourself and your people. Happy students not only give better teacher evaluations, but they learn better too. This makes the teacher more successful.

OFFICE ETIQUETTE

Another applied method of the Carnegie recommendation to “Make the other person feel important” involves office hours. There are ways to make it more comfortable for the students to visit you in your office. Some are not intimidated and will stop by during office hours or make an appointment. But what about the students who never ask for help inside or outside of class?

As referenced above, in the study conducted by Lammers and Smith (2008), students value the approachability of their instructors. In fact, the compiled results of the study found that student’s ranked instructor approachability at #5 on the list of most important variables for student learning (p. 66). Make sure your office hours are clearly marked on the syllabus and outside your door. Speaking of doors consider taking down the paper that barricades the window in your door. Every new faculty member seems to take a cue from the others that they should block the window so no one can look in.

Have a comfortable chair for the student. Offer a small piece of candy or your business card or a glass of water. These small courtesies will make a big difference to your student. Our children’s pediatrician was a master at making you feel as if he had all the time in the world to talk to you. There was never a rush when you were seeing Dr. Zager. His patient times were probably average, but he made you feel like your kid was the most important person in the world. If you don’t have time to talk, schedule an appointment so that your time with your student will be relaxing and productive.

GO ROCK CLIMBING (OR THE MORAL EQUIVALENT)

After teaching a first year seminar on business ethics four times a professor finally took the class to the “top of the mountain” so to speak. By lining up a team building session at the start of the semester that included rock climbing, the teacher indicated that this class was going to be fun and they were all in it together. Lest you worry that you will be out climbing Everest, most campuses have a rock climbing facility or something like it on campus at the Health and Wellness center.

You might also question whether devoting a class period to this endeavor is worth it. What does this team building say to the student? The teacher understands what things interest the student (rock climbing) and it indicates that this class is going to be different. Throughout the semester you will notice that students work more easily in groups, participate more in class discussion and as a result learn better.

Care will have to be taken to make sure all students can participate in one or more of the activities. Not everyone can physically handle rock climbing and it is important that those students not feel excluded. A similar, but less strenuous, activity is dividing students up in teams. Each team has to take a container of Tinker Toys and try to build the highest structure. It is amazing to watch how different groups handle this simple activity.

POST GRADUATION

The strength of a teacher can be the vast network of former students. A college instructor has an inherent networking advantage over business people who may only have a few dozen direct report employees in an entire career. Few teachers take advantage of this resource. As Mackay (1997) writes: “Up the proverbial creek? If you’ve got a network, you’ve always got a paddle” (p. 4).

Do we tell our students they will only have one job with one company, one marriage with one person, and one set of close friends in their lives? Often we act like we only need to worry about the job we have at our present institution, shutting ourselves off from anything outside of our classroom and department. Often professors end up feeling isolated because they approach their careers in this manner. We need to engage in networking both for ourselves and to model for our students.

A network is “an organized collection of your personal contacts and your personal contacts’ own networks. Networking is finding fast whom you need to get what you need in any given situation and helping others do the same” (Mackay, 1997, p. 61).

The opportunity to interact with your students does not end at graduation. At the very least you should set up a LinkedIn connection during a student's senior year. This is good for your network and it models networking behavior for the students.

Need money, volunteer help, or connections? Long time teachers will always have a well-placed student to assist as long as the ongoing network connection is maintained. For example, there was a departmental banquet without funding at a business school. Over many years labor-intensive bake sales were employed with minimal effect. A professor who understood the importance of networking took over the job and, with one phone call to a former student, the departmental banquet was funded by an alumnus who wanted to be involved.

The people in Career Services will be thrilled with your efforts to connect with the students as they leave and follow them in their new jobs. Alumni Relations will be particularly happy, because they know that a good teacher-student relationship is very helpful in developing committed alumni who later become mentors and donors.

Figure out ways to involve your former students. Ask a graduate to serve as an alumni mentor to a particular class. Line them up as a guest speaker. Invite your student to coffee or lunch. You might even want to do business with them. For example, invite them to attend your Rotary or Kiwanis meeting. By the way if you are not in an outside service organization, you might be missing other opportunities to advance your career.

CONCLUSION

Most professors are balancing teaching, scholarship and service in a challenging university environment. In teaching today it is not enough to be an expert in your field. You must also bring out a student's desire to learn. In the modern world there are countless demands vying for your student's attention and "given the different factors affecting college student's lives, motivating them is an essential role for every teacher for a successful teaching-learning environment" (Halawah, 2011, p. 380). The principles that Dale Carnegie introduced to the business world in the 1930's are still very relevant and can be easily applied to the teacher-student relationship.

Whether or not you agree that the student is the customer, making their experience more enjoyable and rewarding will lead to better student satisfaction. Our premise is that happier students learn better and this is borne out by the literature.

Simple networking practices that are routine in the business world are often never employed at the university. These practices include asking questions, shaking hands, smiling, learning a person's name and sending thank you notes. We all too often resort to straight lecture. Certainly this is safe ground. We know our own material much better than the students. Yet, our students see this as a sign of disrespect to them and their needs; it undercuts our effectiveness.

The foundation of "How to Win Friends and Influence People" is that we will have a great deal more influence with people who are our friends (Carnegie, 1981). In essence, the first step to increasing our influence is to be liked by the people we want to influence. To be likable we can employ time tested business techniques in our academic setting to the same positive effect.

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