

## **Dr, Pinkett's Seven Laws of Networking**

By Victoria L. Chapman

December 2009

The goal is “Connectedness”! At least that’s what Dr. Randal Pinkett – Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO of BCT Partners and season-four winner of NBC’s *The Apprentice* – told the audience at the October networking event of the Westchester/Greater Connecticut (WGC) Chapter of the National Black MBA Association. The event was sponsored in conjunction with Monroe College and held at the Residence Inn in New Rochelle, NY.

Dr. Pinkett addressed the gathering of students and professionals on the theme Networking 202: The 7 Laws of Networking. And recognizing the audience’s diverse breadth of experience, Dr. Pinkett aimed to make the address relevant to those entering the realm of professional networking as well as to those intent to take it to the next level.

He started the evening by citing three key trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Globalization, Technological Advances and Societal Diversity. As the ability to do business on an international level grows, he explained, societal diversity in the marketplace is inevitable; and with ever-changing advances in technology, new forms of communication have “changed the game” of information exchange and networking.

Ultimately, the way to stay ahead of that game is through what he described as “connectedness”. Connectedness, according to Dr. Pinkett is “building meaningful, productive and mutually-supportive relationships in an increasingly diverse, global community.” Productive, mutually-supportive and meaningful? How does this happen? Dr. Pinkett broke it down into what he calls the 7 Laws of Networking.

Law #1 – Networking is a Social-First, Business-Second Activity: Relationships Matter.

*Dr. Pinkett urged us to try to understand the individual we’re networking with – understand what matters to him/her. We need to attend to the little things. We should each clarify our expectations. Always show personal integrity – which is conforming one’s actions to one’s words – keep our commitments and “fess up” when we mess up. Essentially, it’s a relationship, not just a contact.*

Law #2 – You are Your Word, Your Work, Then Your Network: Character, Integrity and How We Represent Ourselves.

*Our word speaks to who we are – credibility.*

*Our work speaks to what we do – is there a standard of excellence?*

*Our network speaks to who we know.*

*If our word can’t be trusted and our work is mediocre, who cares who we know? Their word and work may be questionable too.*

### Law #3 – It's Not Who You Know, It's Who Knows You

*Meeting someone isn't knowing them. It's easy to collect business cards, but how do we stand out from the crowd? First impressions are lasting ones. A few tips from Dr. Pinkett: perfect the elevator pitch; following up with personal letters or notes – not by e-mail; include additional information on business cards when giving them out and taking a photo and sending it via e-mail with a thank you note.*

Law #4 – Weak Ties Can be Your Most Valuable Ties: Strong ties are family and friends, weak ties are infrequent contacts.

*Dr. Pinkett shared that circles among strong ties are often too tight, too insular and everyone knows the same people. Weak ties have a wider circle of contacts, wider sphere of information. Dr. Pinkett noted that 74% of jobs come through referrals. So how best to “operationalize” weak ties. He suggests networking groups and events.*

Law #5 – All Networks are Not Created Equal

*There are three kinds of networks:*

- 1. Dense – “everyone we know knows everyone we know”*
- 2. Borrowed – 2 degrees of separation – the networks of others become ours*
- 3. Sparse – start knowing a lot of people in different places, who don't know each other.*

*Dr. Pinkett indicated that these network types shift at different stages in a career. Dense networks are usually at the start of the career. Borrowed networks start to develop about mid-career and sparse networks start to grow as the career matures.*

Law #6 – There is Strength in Numbers: Who else is like-minded and how can we align?

*When it comes to alliances all the adages apply:*

*All for one and one for all  
2 heads are better than one  
TEAM-Together Everyone Achieves More*

Law #7 – You Get Out What Your Put Into Your Network

*For all that can be gained from networking Dr. Pinkett stressed that “networking is more about what you can do for someone else than what you can get out of it.”*

*He also noted that the returns on networking include: human capital, financial capital, intellectual capital, cultural capital and social capital.*

As the evening came to a close, Dr. Pinkett's response to a question about which personality traits were best suited to networking helped to sum up the theme well. His answer was to be authentic to who you are and don't try to fit into someone else's model.