

Here's a Novel Idea:



Connect with your Connections!

Mike Klassen – Content Marketing Consultant, Speaker & Designer
Helping Businesses Increase Sales and Build Deeper Connections

As great as the latest social media tools can be, the greatest social media tool is the telephone.

When I was a kid, I really wanted a candlestick-style phone like you see on the cover of this PDF. Don't know why, but I thought they looked cool. Still do. I eventually got one, but the novelty of actually using it wore off after a while.

In a sense, it seems like talking to new business colleagues on the phone has become a bit of a novelty, too.

You'd think in these days of texting, instant messaging and e-mail that picking up a phone to connect with potential business colleagues makes as much sense as lighting your house with kerosene lamps... it seems so archaic and unnecessary when there are other "current" tools to do the job, right?

I think that's a mistaken attitude. And when I originally wrote this article in 2010, I never dreamed it would become so popular and resonate with people who were also questioning the true business value of the people they were connected to.

The day the light went on for me

One day I looked at my connections on LinkedIn and realized something rather embarrassing: I had no idea who half those people were.

I knew there was a reason I was connected to them because LinkedIn connections require permission from both parties.

And I could guess that some I didn't know were probably connections that came after interactions from LinkedIn's Q&A section. We connected after I answered a question, but the relationship went no further.

From my own completely unscientific poll, only a relative few people seem to use LinkedIn as a serious tool in terms of creating a *meaningful* relationship with their connections.

The rest of us really aren't sure what we should do with the connections we've made.

And there's that small group who seem to just be playing a numbers game... get as many connections as possible just for the sake of it. Or use it as another way to spam people through the status update function.

Bottom line: For those of us in that "not sure what to do" category, there's room for improvement.

So I decided that I was going to reach out to the connections I didn't really know and ask to talk (gasp!) by phone.

Let me be clear: *This is not a sales call*

Personally, I love helping people connect. If you need a person who does X and I happen to know someone who does X, I get a lot of joy connecting the two of you.

But how can I connect people if I don't know them that well? How can I find potential partners on projects if I don't really know you or what you do? How can I be a fantastic trusted resource for my clients if I'm not constantly building and interacting with my connections.

The answer is, I can't. Or at least I can't do it well.

That prompted me to start contacting my connections on LinkedIn and ask to talk. I point them to this article you're reading now so they know why I'm contacting them.

So far, all the calls have been great and showed me what a good idea this is.

Why don't more people do this? It's too easy not to. It's scary to reach out to people you don't know. It takes time. You don't know what you'll say. You're afraid of what the other person will think or that they won't believe it's not a sales call.

Whatever reason is holding you back... get over it. This idea is too good to find excuses not to do it. We're like hummingbirds bouncing around from one social media tool to the next, rarely stopping long enough to get to know people beyond a superficial level. *We can do so much better.*

Allow me to share how simple my process is

1. If it's a brand new connection, I now tell them right off the top that I'd like to talk by phone. If it's someone that's been a connection for a long time and I've never really interacted with them, I'll send them a note through LinkedIn and explain what I'm doing.

2. In that request to talk, I'm totally honest about why I'm doing

this, and it's the reason I've given here. I also make it clear that it's not a sales call. Truthfully, I couldn't care less if we talk about what I do. I simply want to know about the other person and his/her business.

3. Assuming they accept the invitation, we setup a time to talk either by phone or Skype. Skype is really handy to talk to people in other countries. While this hasn't happened yet, if they have no desire to talk at all, either by phone or even e-mail, I think I've probably learned everything I need to know about them.

4. When the scheduled time/day arrives, I'm the one to make the call since I made the request. I don't ask to talk, then expect them to call me.

5. I ask lots of questions, but I don't have a rigid list. I don't want it to feel like an interview, I want it to be a natural conversation. What do I ask? Great question. Glad you asked.

- ▶ I ask about what they do. Yes, their website probably says it, but there's often more to it. Honestly, not everyone does a great job of explaining their passion on their site. Digging a little deeper helps me understand them better. I've been surprised by how many people I've talked to who are actually transitioning or reassessing what they want to offer. That's obviously not something you'd want to put on your site for all to read.

- ▶ I ask which keywords should make me think of them. For example, I know a lot of copywriters, but most have preferred areas they like to work in. Perhaps even more important is understanding what *isn't* a good fit for them.

- ▶ I ask how they market themselves or their products. Since I don't tend to connect with other designers, this question

isn't so I can gain some competitive edge. I mostly talk with other freelancers and we all deal with how best to market ourselves. So I'm curious to know what has and hasn't work for them. And I'm also willing share my successes and failures if they're interested.

And depending on how the conversation goes, there are any number of other questions that might spring to mind.

As they're talking, I'm typing notes that I'll put alongside their entry in my address book. And I tell them I'm doing that so they don't hear the keyboard clicking and wonder if I'm chatting on Facebook while they're talking.

6. If they want to know about what I do in the design, consulting and speaking realm, I'm happy to share whatever they want to know. And if that happens, we both begin to get a better picture of whether there might be some partnership opportunities between us down the road.

7. When we wrap up, I stress that they are free to contact me any time if they want to talk, bounce around some ideas, or update me on what they're doing and their keywords.

I don't put them on a mailing list. Not that there's anything wrong with that if you think it's beneficial and you've asked their permission. It's just not my style.

But what if you have a product or service that can help them?

The intent of my calls isn't to sell. But there are times when I'm talking to someone and I know I can help with a problem they're having.

If it's a simple problem with a simple solution, I give them the answer right there on the phone.

If it's a problem that I know I can solve, but will take more than just a brief moment on the phone, I have no problem explaining that their problem is something I solve for clients and I'm happy to have them as a client if they feel it's right for them.

I make it that simple. No hard sell. No pushing to setup another phone call. I just explain that I work with other people on that problem and if they'd like to know more about it, they can contact me anytime to get more information. Then, I get the focus back on a sincere exchange of information without any pressure that it's a sales call.

This happened to me on the same day I'm putting together this PDF you're reading. I was talking to someone I just connected with and had no idea about his story or what his business challenges were.

As he talked, I knew I could help him with a specific problem. I gave him some quick tips that he could put into play after we talked, but also mentioned that if he wanted to develop a long-term plan, we should setup a consulting session.

I didn't talk price and I didn't even ask if he wanted to set something up at that moment. I just mentioned it's a service I offered, then we got back to sharing our stories.

You should do the same if the situation comes up, and the person you're talking to should as well. After all, you are in business to make money. You just don't want to lose site of the main reason for the call: to build a strong network.

In the calls I've done so far, I could tell there was genuine

appreciation for the effort to reach out. And in all cases, I've shared different tips that I've picked up that they can apply to their own situations.

I've learned from them as well because I've found people genuinely like to engage and share what they know.

While I started this mission on LinkedIn, you could just as easily start with Facebook or your social media tool of choice.

As I mentioned earlier, I've been pleasantly surprised by the response to my original article. I know I'm far from the first to suggest people talk to each other on the phone. But it seems like we've hit a point where we understand that, perhaps, we've been missing something important and meaningful when we're *only* talking to people online.

So here's my challenge to you...

Take a look at the connections you have, whether it's on LinkedIn or some other site where you've actually had to agree to be connections.

How well do you know all of them? What might be the value of getting to know them better? What might that mean for the growth and success of your business and theirs? Are you truly interested in being a help to business colleagues and strengthening your network, or are you using social media just

to push our your sales message?

Start with just one person on your list that you think might be someone who has a complimentary product or service. On the other side of the coin, find someone who seems totally opposite to what you do and contact them first.

If you're not sure where to start and sincere about putting this into action, get in touch with me and let's setup a call. It might be a good way for you to see how it goes. Plus, we'll both learn something about each other and have another person in our networks.

You can contact me through: <http://www.mikeklassen.com>

The worst thing you can do...

I don't want to be too blunt, but if this is a new idea to you and you just set this PDF aside without taking action, you're doing yourself and your business a disservice.

I might even go so far as to say you're doing a disservice to your connections who would benefit from learning about you and what you can offer.

Please don't let your connections just be numbers and icons on a screen. Reach out to them and build a network that is dedicated to helping each other reach your business goals.

About Mike Klassen



Mike Klassen is a consultant, speaker, author and direct marketing graphic designer, helping businesses boost sales and create more personal connections with customers and prospects.

He speaks extensively about content marketing and content repurposing, showing how businesses can stand out from competitors while solidifying relationships with customers and prospects.

In his role as a direct marketing graphic designer, Mike works with clients to leverage their content through magalogs, books, sales letters and training material.

In addition to helping clients around the world, Mike works directly with businesses on the stage and in the classroom. His experience is shared in articles and advice that have appeared in *Print Professional Magazine*, *ESBJournal*, *Home Business Magazine*, and *Inside Freelance Design*.

He's also the host of the *Increase Sales & Build Deeper Connections Podcast* and co-host of the *Neanderthal Marketing Radio Show*, both available on iTunes.

Mike is the author of *Increase Sales & Build Deeper Connections: Maximizing Your Content to Boost Sales and Generate Better-Quality Leads*.

To learn more about Mike and how he can help you boost sales or speak to your group, visit: <http://mikeklassen.com>

[Mike's] presentation was a stand-out among our delegates. His content was well thought-out and he provided lots of examples and tips on how those listening could take immediate action on the points he had to share. What else I loved about Mike was the fact that he was extremely approachable and our members enjoyed lots of face-time with Mike as he helped them through various issues relating to Marketing and building their personal and business brand. We'd welcome him back anytime and would highly encourage any organisation to engage Mike wherever in the world they may happen to be.

Dale Beaumont

Author of 16 Best Selling Books

Founder and CEO of Business Blueprint