

Community Herald

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A few years ago I was at one of those corporate speech events followed by a networking reception, two of my favorite events combined. I will talk about networking later, but first the speech; the visiting expert was a consultant sharing with Haligonians how HRM could be better, another of my favorite topics and the #1 reason I ran for Councillor. The room was full of business people that were just devouring the advice for HRM; at the end, during question period a friend of mine asked the consultant “So what’s the secret sauce for Halifax?” I loved the question. The answer was straight forward, infrastructure, education and government funding. I worked up the courage and raised my hand and said “In my humble opinion I think the “secret sauce for HRM” is to care about each other, look out for one another and Do unto each other. The Golden Rule. I still think this is the key for a great community.

So how are we doing practicing the Golden Rule? There are plenty of opportunities in a typical day to be nice to others, such as in traffic, at work, at home, and in your neighbourhood, on Twitter and Facebook, or at City Hall or in the Legislature. In fact, I think “not being nice” is a form of bullying when dealing with a stranger or with someone you are familiar with.

I taught my son and daughter from a very young age to “be a good friend”. I did not know it at the time, but this advice would work and eventually produce good grades as well. The same advice I gave my kids is the same advice that results in friendships, marriages, job offers and election victories. Putting others first becomes a rewarding way of life. The key isn’t “What’s in it for me” rather “What’s in it for others”.

Now I will mention the second part of the event, the networking reception. The same strategy works at networking events that works at your children’s school, your work, and at home with your loved ones; put others first, treat others well, listen, and be a good friend.

About 20 years ago I came up with the notion of “Reverse Networking” which I have been working at it ever since. The simple premise is to promote others rather than yourself. If you tell me that you are the best at what you do, I discount it because it is coming from you. If you really are the best at what you do, someone else should tell me about you. And since others will be talking about you, you can focus your energy on talking about others. Kind of like the Golden Rule, people are going to talk about you, just make it easy for them to say something nice.

Whatever your special talents or gifts, identify and embrace them and use them for the good of HRM. In my case I love to collect friends and connect friends. I have almost thousands of Facebook friends, LinkedIn connections and Twitter followers. I often ask “What’s better a quantity network or a quality network? It is a bit of a trick question. First of all, no one should judge who or what contact is “quality”; secondly, in my quantity network I have my twenty-five close connections, and a whole quantity of connections to go deeper with and hopefully positively impact.

So when is a good time to test this out? Start today before you need to. If you try “reverse networking” when it’s beneficial to you, people will doubt your authenticity. Start today by holding the door for someone, letting someone proceed in traffic, buying a co-worker or stranger a coffee, sending a thank you card or calling your grandmother. People may be suspicious if this is not your current modus operandi, but they can learn to love the new humble, gentle, kind, considerate you. That’s the “secret sauce” at school, home, work and across HRM.