

# Building a Powerful Coaching Network

Success Comes Through Deep and  
Meaningful Relationships



The Road Ends Here

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Networking is without a doubt the most important element of being successful in any profession. The old adage, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” is exactly right. One common trait among all successful people in the world is a strong network of friends, colleagues, and partners.

Unfortunately we know this to be true, but most professional people do not know how to build a powerful network. For example, we all know that a good diet and exercise is the key to good health, much like we know that a strong network is essential for success. But our lack of action keeps us stuck in neutral and our career becomes stagnate. Knowing what to do and doing it is what separates the haves from the have not’s. Learning to put knowledge and strategies into action is the key.

The One to a Million Networking Exercise

What would you say if I told you that any young coach is connected to virtually every coach in the game of basketball? This exercise will prove in a very simple way that any coach is already a part of a massive basketball community.

How is this possible? The actor Kevin Bacon is said to be connected to everyone in Hollywood through six degrees. He has either worked with or known every person in entertainment numbering in the thousands.

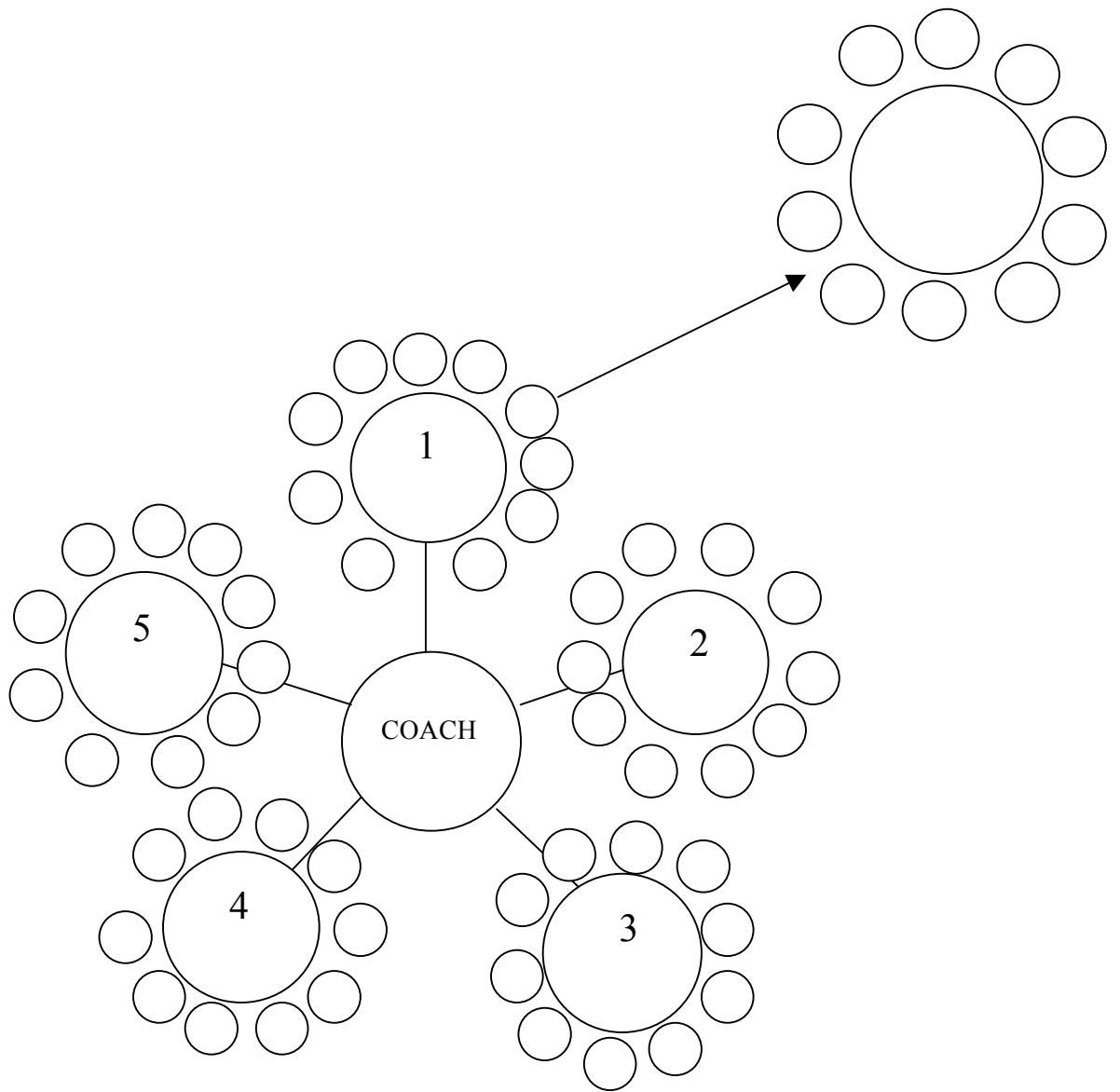
Here’s how it works.

Coach A knows Coach B.

Coach B knows Coach C.

Coach A is connected to Coach C without even knowing him. Coach B is the thread that connects all three of these coaches.

Virtual networking brings people together through others. The more coaches you know the more connections you potentially have. Even if you know one coach, you will be virtually connected to all of his contacts. For example, if your coaching buddy is connected to 50 coaches then through two degrees you are also connected to those 50 coaches.



## The Power of Exponential Network Growth

In this example you are the coach in the middle so we'll put "Coach" in the middle circle.

One Degree--You are connected to 5 main contacts in the diagram, a total of 5 contacts.

Each of your 5 contacts has 10 each. Each coach that you know knows 10 others.

Now you are connected to 5 coaches + 50 coaches through 2 degrees.

Total connections = 55 coaches

Two Degrees--Next, imagine that each of the 10 coaches is connected to 10 more coaches. Now the five circles represent 100 coaches.

Total connections = 505 coaches

Three Degrees--Next, take the circle that represents 100 connections and each of them knows 10 coaches which equal 1000 each

Total connections = 1005 coaches

Four Degrees--Next, each of those 1000 coaches know 10 more coaches and now the total is

Total connections = 10,000 coaches.

Five Degrees--Next, we take 10,000 and multiply times 10.

Total connections = 100,000 coaches

Six Degrees—Lastly, we take 100,000 coaches times 10.

Total connections = 1,000,000 coaches

Just as Kevin Bacon is connected to everyone in Hollywood, you are connected through 6 degrees to ONE MILLION coaches. You now have the most powerful coaching network in the world!

### Strategies for meeting coaches and developing relationships

The above exercise proves that you are virtually connected to a million coaches. This fact should empower you to dedicate time and energy to developing your network due to this realization.

Does a virtual connection automatically mean any coach is an important part of your network? The answer is no. The good news is that there are many strategies that can be employed to begin building relationships in the business.

The key is how your million contacts can help you begin to build relationships one person at a time. The following example illustrates how this can be done.

You are walking through an airport (or at a clinic, game, practice, vacation, Final Four) and you recognize a Division I coach. As other people are saying hello to the coach, you also decide to introduce yourself. You say how glad you are to meet Coach A and ask for his advice on rising up in the coaching profession. You then mention that you are a good friend of Coach B. Because Coach A and Coach B know each other, you now have formed a special bond with Coach A. Relationships begin just like this and proves the value of knowing the importance of virtual networking. You now have a chance to be connected directly to Coach A instead of a 2 degree connection through Coach B.

### Creative ways to meet college coaches and build your network

Every day can be an opportunity to make connections with college coaches. Each coach you talk to or see is a potential connection in your network.

Here is a list of ten ways to meet and make contact with coaches:

1. Call coaches on the phone and ask for advice.
2. Write handwritten notes to coaches asking for advice.
3. Meet coaches in person. This can happen anywhere at any time.
4. Study their system on DVD and follow up with questions.
5. Attend clinics and meet coaches before or after their presentations.
6. Attend the Final Four and meet hundreds of coaches from all over the country.
7. Send list of prospective underclass players in your area or on your AAU team to coaches.
8. Work college basketball camps for the purpose of getting to know the coaching staff.
9. Observe a college practice and meet and visit with the coaches afterwards.
10. Attend a pre or post season skill development workout at a college and meet coaches.

## Following up after the initial contact

“The Fortune is in the Follow Up”

The millionaires in network marketing will tell you that the fortune is in the follow up. Once connections are made the follow up will determine if that person will truly become a valuable part of your network or not. If you are adept at following up and developing relationships you will begin building a big and strong coaching network immediately.

Plant seeds and watch them grow.

Each person you meet in coaching is a potential part of your network and may become a huge asset to you. Each person you meet is a seed that must be planted, watered, given sunlight, and nurtured. If you do this the results will be staggering.

## Handwritten Notes—The special touch that will grow your network quickly.

There are many different ways to follow up after an initial meeting with a coach. Here are a few ideas. I am a committed hand writer and have been for over 30 years.

Why handwriting?

Question: If you receive 5 pieces of mail at home on day and four were bills or junk mail and one was a handwritten note addressed to you. Which piece of mail would you tear into first? Of course you would open the handwritten note first because you are curious and it represents a personal touch, and today very few people are taking the time to hand write notes.

If this is true it makes sense to use the powerful tool of handwriting to build your network. You will become noticed quickly by those coaches you write.

Personally I would not use email to correspond with coach for the purpose of building your network. Why? Because anyone can email, it only takes a few seconds, and it is impersonal.

Reasons to follow up with handwritten notes:

1. It is personal and shows genuine interest.
2. It shows initiative and extra effort on your part because it takes time to hand write.
3. Coaches will open handwritten notes first and read them.
4. Your chances are much greater to receive a response with a handwritten note.
5. Your name will be noticed and be put on the coach's radar much quicker.

Remember, the fortune is in the follow up and you enhance your chances of building a strong network by taking the time and extra effort to become an expert hand writer.

Now that we've convinced you that handwriting is the only way to follow up, here are some follow up ideas:

The old saying, “out of sight, out of mind,” applies in a coach's world. That goes for your prospective coaching network too. Face it, your customers are not sitting around thinking of you,

wondering what you're up to, thinking about all of your great assets as a coach.

An important and effective thing to do is simply remind them about you.

How do you do this the right way?

Employ the "keep in touch strategy" to maintain contact with coaches throughout the year. Your top group of coaches deserve a handwritten note at least every other week, or 25 times per year. The goal of your note is to say hello, stay in touch, and get your name in front of them again. Over time they will recognize your name and become curious about who you are and what makes you take extra time and effort to keep in touch.

Here are some creative strategies to use when writing coaches:

1. Send a pre season note wishing them a great and injury free season.
2. Write a note of congratulations on signing a recruit or good class of recruits.
3. Send a "great job" note after a big win.
4. Send a "hang in there" note after a loss.
5. Send something special like a set play or favorite drill. Use professional software to diagram your plays to give a great first impression.
6. Research great inspirational quotes and send with your note.
7. Send articles and nuggets from other successful coaches in any sport.
8. Recommend good books to read and include some nuggets from the book.
9. Send your team's schedule for the season.
10. Wrap up the season with a note and request the opportunity to watch post season workouts.
11. Send a DVD and written copy of a recent game prep/scouting report you completed.
12. Video tape your individual workouts with your players and send with a note.
13. Send postcards from your program, making it easier for the coach to quickly read.
14. Include business cards with your notes to get your name in front of them repeatedly.
15. Offer to send names of high profile underclass prospects in your area.

It is extremely important to set up a "writing schedule" for each week, month and year and stick to it. Most intend to keep in touch with their prospective network but fail to put in the time on a regular basis. Remember, your goal is to be disciplined and do the ordinary things to become extraordinary.

### Attend the Final Four to meet coaches from around the country.

The Final Four is the meeting place for every college coach and is the site of the NABC (National Association of Basketball Coaches) Convention for 4 days.

It takes a lot of planning to make efficient use of this time. It is well worth the financial investment to attend the Final Four because the basketball world is at your fingertips.

Preparation is crucial and here are some ideas before you leave for the Final Four:

1. Determine which coaches you want to meet with for networking purposes.
2. What jobs are open that you want to get involved in and who are the coaches you would need to meet with to help you on that job.
3. When and where you are meeting specific coaches? Prepare this in advance before you leave and if possible get the cell phone number of that coach. It gets tricky because schedules can change once they get there. Some are into relaxing and unwinding so even if you have an appointment it may not materialize.
4. The resume myth--The idea of hanging out in the lobby and handing out resumes is a myth. There is not just one hotel, there are a dozen of them.
5. Use business cards-- Introducing yourself to coaches and giving them a business card is a good approach. If you are asked to give a resume to him, you can grab it from your room and make sure you know when/where you will give it to him. Following up before leaving is crucial and again as soon as you arrive home after the Final Four.

### 7 Keys to using summer camps to gain experience, meet coaches and build your network

Here are some valuable strategies to use at college summer basketball camps to build your network:

1. Decide which camps to work.
2. Identify the Camp Director and submit application to work camp
3. Stay aggressive until your summer camp employment has been confirmed.
4. Preparation before the camp starts.
5. Important strategies to employ during camp.
6. End of camp strategies.
7. Follow Up after camp.

#### 1. Decide which camps to work--

This all depends on your GOAL for working camp in the first place. A. To be a better coach, B. Learn from the other coaches at the camp, C. Make HS/college contacts, D. Make inroads with the program you are working camp for.

This again depends on your goals.



If your goals are to make inroads into the program or gain contacts for your career, this is a very important issue.

Know what you are getting into.

--Is their staff at camp? Is the Head Coach and assistants at camp?

--Is there a camp social during the week? This is a good time to meet coaches in a relaxed setting.

--Is this camp conducive to making contacts?

--Do college coaches work the camp?

--Is the camp Dead or Alive? A Dead camp is a waste of time but an Alive camp will offer great opportunities to meet coaches and develop relationships for the future.

--Is your only goal to pick up a check?

--Can you commit your entire summer to camps? If so you will make a lot of progress. If you can only dedicate a week, two weeks or more get the most out of it.

## 2. Identify the camp director and submit application to camp

Submit your camp letter and resume early, i.e.—January. It will get filed, but I have always remembered the first letters I received from camp coaches.

Follow up once a month in a passive way, i.e.—email, note in the mail, quick call or voice mail.

Include a willingness to do EXTRA duties while at camp. IDEAS?---

Registration, hand things out, Pick up garbage, ice the beer, get sandwiches. OVER-DELIVER.

Why? The goal is to separate yourself from the thousands of others out there with the same goal as you.

KEY---Volunteer to come in a day EARLY to camp to help preparation. File, make signs, staple, collate, put together packets, prepare the gym, registration are some good ideas. That one day early could put you in the office for a day, giving you a great chance to meet all of the coaches and get some one on one time with them.

## 3. Stay aggressive until your summer camp employment has been confirmed

This is a tricky issue. I find that about half of the verbal commitments fall through, usually in the days before camp. You are accepted when you have a signed form from the camp director explaining your camp responsibilities, where you will be staying, how much it will pay, dates, times, what to bring.

Again, this is not a 100% guarantee, but it is as close as you can get.

My Experience indicates—

1. Identify the weeks you are free and sign up for two camps per week.
2. Accept the first one you sign a contract with and tell the other camp you can't make it.
3. Geographically, piece camps together to limit travel. i.e.—time/gas prices.
4. A lot of camps are just two and three days now so your opportunities are greater.
5. Request that a brochure be sent to you. Many times the dates on the Internet can be wrong.

4. Preparation before camp starts—Plan as if you will have no chance to leave campus to buy any items. Pack cash, note cards, resume, business cards, stamps, pens, X & O's, tapes from the season, instructional tapes, proper coaching clothing and casual clothing and coaching clipboard. Write and mail notes to the college staff the night before you will leave campus. They will receive them the same day camp ends and you leave.

5. Important strategies to employ during camp

Check you camp schedule carefully at the camp coaches meeting prior to camp. Identify pockets of time where you are free and ask the assistants if they would be available to meet with you during those times. Use any free time (unless you have a duty assigned that day) to find the staff and meet them or spend time with them.

6. End of camp strategies

Get all contact information before you leave of any one at camp you want to keep in contact with. Track down the head coach/assistants before leaving camp and thank them. Offer to stay after camp to clean up, organize and close down things. This is another opportunity to get in front of the coaching staff. Greet the secretary before leaving because they can be a big help down the road.

7. Follow up after camp

Immediately begin a note writing schedule for the coaches you met at camp and follow through with it. Send a positive summary of the camp, including any feedback good or areas of improvement with the camp director. Indicate a desire to be put on the coaching list for next summer!

10 Strategies for setting yourself apart in the networking process

Below is a list of creative strategies the coaches in my College Coach Now program have used to their advantage in the past.

1. Visit college practices and individual skill workouts to learn their system and terminology and to meet the coaches. These are great environments to meet the coaches without hundreds of others waiting to do the same. It will give you some precious minutes to introduce yourself and ask for advice. Make sure you indicate that your goal is to become a college basketball coach and the passion you have to accomplish that goal. Once you ask for advice, shut up and let the coach or coaches advise you. This is a time-tested strategy that has greatly helped many of my coaches through the years.
2. Become an excellent hand writer and develop a writing schedule you will be committed to and follow up with on a daily basis.

3. Find a list of the Top 30 Assistant coaches in the country and write hand written note congratulating them and ask for career advice. A great way to open the door to new contacts.
4. After applying for job and not landing them, write letter of thanks to the coach and stay in touch with him. Not getting a job can be a blessing by allowing more people to enter your network.
5. Here is a question asked by one of my coaches and my answer:  
Question: Recently I saw a big time Division I head coach at a social following a clinic.  
Answer: I would get between him and the door and not let him get out of the room.  
The key is to meet and follow up with coaches. Simply ask them for one piece of advice on how to get a college coaching job...and let them answer. They may give you 30 seconds or 30 minutes. Don't be shy because at one time they all were in your shoes too!  
Follow up with a brief note to him saying you missed him at the game but want to meet him.
6. Another example from one of our coaches:  
"I send a letter to Frank Haith, head coach at University of Miami, about a great underclass recruit here in Michigan. He wrote me back and told me to stay in touch with him. I couldn't believe it."  
My advice---Do the same with 50 head coaches and you may hear back from half of them and open the door to meet and develop a relationship with 25 head coaches.
7. Here is a great thing that happened earlier this week. Taking your advice I wrote Georgia Tech's volunteer assistant and got an email from him this Monday. He was great, giving me great answers. He told me he was pretty much in the right place at the right time. He coached in the Atlanta area for about 12 years, always worked their summer camps, and even coached at a DII school in S.C. to get some NCAA experience. He said last year he taught full-time at a high school and said it was very tough. This year though he has a part-time job. I emailed him back asking when Tech starts workouts and if all schools allow volunteers and he said it depend on the school regarding the volunteer coaches.  
Great advice from you!
8. I also emailed Purdue assistant Cuonzo Martin to see if I could introduce myself Saturday because they will be 40 miles away in Ann Arbor to play Michigan Sunday. I will keep my fingers crossed. It was a boost of confidence when I emailed him about the frosh at Detroit Country Day and he responded by agreeing with me because he saw him earlier. I sent a similar email to Bobby Kummer at University of Charlotte about the kid and he responded with a thanks.

9. "I tried something new this past week. I gave myself the assignment of helping the Ramblin' Wreck of Georgia Tech. If they win tomorrow against Virginia they will play Carolina.

Sometimes if I see a good play or whatever on TV I will write it down. Last year UNC was playing USC in the Sweet 16 and had the ball with 0.8 seconds in the first half with the ball on the side. They ran a great play and got a good look. I copied it down and have glanced at it from time to time over the past year. A few weeks ago I turned to Wake Forest at UNC and the first half was wrapping up. Wouldn't you know it, pretty much the same situation but with 3.3 seconds. Again, the Tar Heels got a great look and scored. Wayne Ellington hit the 3 in the corner of Wake's bench. I noticed the motion right from the start. It was pretty much the same action but from a different formation.

So, I copied both down with their information and sent it to Coach Hewitt Monday morning on over-night delivery. I did that because I figured they would leave for Charlotte Wednesday and I wanted to make sure it at least got to Tech. Whether he opened it, who knows.

If everything breaks right, the letter was opened and looked at, GT wins and faces UNC and UNC will have the ball late in the first half or maybe at the end of the game from a side out of bounds situation.

I'm hoping all of this will allow me to meet Coach Hewitt of Georgia Tech soon and add him to my network. "

10. Another coach commented: "I applied for an opening at the Citadel last year. I knew they played Army the previous season and I knew that Coach Conroy and Coach Crews at Army went on a trip to Kuwait together earlier in the summer. So I used that connection and asked Coach Crews at Army to recommend me to Coach Conroy at the Citadel. It worked for me at Dartmouth also after I saw that they also played Army and Coach Crews gave me a good recommendation for that job as well. I keep in touch and am developing good relationships with both coaches in case there is another opportunity down the road. I don't even think I would've gotten in the door at both places if I wouldn't have recognized that connection."