

VIAGRA (sildenafil citrate) tablets For men with ED See prescribing information	loading Roll over to learn more	Important safety information Don't take VIAGRA if you take nitrates, often prescribed for chest pain, as this may cause a sudden, unsafe drop in blood pressure. Discuss your general health status
---	--	--

CNNMoney.com **PRINT THIS**Powered by  **Clickability**

Be a better networker

In this troubled economy, finding your next job (or not) may depend on your having a strong circle of people you can call on, and who know they can call on you.

By [Anne Fisher](#), senior writer
November 7, 2008: 7:13 AM ET

NEW YORK (Fortune) -- You've heard or read it a thousand times (including in this very space): To supercharge your career, particularly when times get tough, you need a big, strong network of professional contacts -- people you can call on, and who know they can call on you, for advice, information, referrals, and introductions.

But many smart professionals are flummoxed when it comes to figuring out exactly how to get such a network started, and how to make their network grow and flourish.

"Networking is one of those things that some people naturally 'get' and others don't," says Ivan R. Misner, founder and CEO of BNI (www.bni.com), a worldwide networking organization with more than 110,000 members in 39 countries. "One metaphor I like is that most people treat networking like hunting - they're out there trying to bag the big one - but it's really a lot more like farming. You have to cultivate relationships over time."

You won't learn how in college, or even in B-school, Misner notes: "Most professors have never run a business, or had to figure out how to rise through the ranks in a big company, so they really don't understand how critical it is."

A survey of 2,200 BNI members found that 87% never had a college course that even mentioned networking - "and we're not talking about entire courses on the subject, which are rarer than unicorns, but any course that even briefly brushed on the subject," Misner says. "Yet, in another of our surveys, of more than 3,800 businesspeople worldwide, 73% said they get most of their business through networking."

To help close that knowledge gap, Misner's new book, *The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Strategies* (with co-author Michelle R. Donovan, Greenleaf Book Group, \$21.95), details a whole year of networking tactics, week by week, explaining how to set goals for what you want to achieve through networking and then make a systematic plan.

Take, for instance, Week 24, in which Misner recommends that you focus your attention on making a great first impression. Since psychologists tell us that people make snap judgments about each other within seven seconds of

their first meeting, every detail matters. For example, body language can be "the silent killer of conversations," Misner says.

Next time you go to a networking event, including an office party, Misner suggests asking a trusted friend to keep an eye out and report back on how you measure up in these four areas:

Eye contact. Are you making steady eye contact throughout your conversations, or looking behind the person you're talking with, to see who else is there?

Arm movement. Where are your arms while you're chatting? Are they folded across your chest (which says, "I'm bored")? It's better if they're tucked behind your back ("I'm interested, I'm listening"). If you're in the habit of gesturing when you talk, to add emphasis to your words, that's good too.

Positioning. Are you standing in an open, welcoming way - or blocking people out of your conversation? Are you leaning on something, looking tired or bored? Are you unable to shake hands because you're juggling a glass and a plate? Tsk, tsk.

Facial expressions. Misner advises keeping conscious control of the look on your face. You don't have to wear a nonstop grin, but do try to look friendly and interested, even if you're not.

What you say counts too, of course. Within the first seven seconds of meeting someone new, ask a question like this: "How can I help you or your business?" "Ask her to talk about what she does," advises Misner. "This others-oriented approach produces a powerful and positive first impression, because people remember you as the person who offered to help them - not just as someone trying to sell them something or get something from them."

The title of Misner's book, by the way, refers to the widespread belief that each of us is connected to everyone else in the world by six degrees of separation - that is, a human chain of half a dozen acquaintances. It's a nice idea, he notes, but then, so is Santa Claus. The popular six-degrees myth stems from a series of experiments by psychologist Stanley Milgram in the '60s and '70s, but Misner points out that Milgram proved only that, at most, 29% of us are connected to everyone else by an average of six mutual friends. That means, obviously, that "six degrees of separation" doesn't apply to the 71% majority. Why does this matter? Milgram's studies "indicate clearly that some people are better connected than others, and connecting is a skill that can be acquired," Misner says. If you're intent on joining that elite group, *The 29% Solution* is a pretty good place to start.

Readers, what do you say? Do you have a strong network? Could it be better? Has your network helped you find a job? Conversely, have you helped colleagues find work? What has helped you - and hasn't? Who's been most helpful? Any pet peeves? [Post your thoughts](#) on the Ask Annie blog. ■

[Quiz: Are you a good networker?](#)

[In defense of the expense-account lunch](#)

Find this article at:

<http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/06/news/economy/networking.fortune/index.htm?po>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

2007 Cable News Network LP, LLP.