



**Be Open to New People**  
**Chapter by Tissa Richards**

I received excellent advice from a mentor early in my career: never turn down an introduction, even if you don't see immediate clear value, or it seems orthogonal to where you currently are.

This advice has been beneficial to me in several ways and its real value has become increasingly clear in recent years. Accepting a wide range of sometimes surprising introductions has:

- Directly expanded my personal first-degree network. It sometimes takes years to understand or leverage the value or contribution of these connections, but ultimately the value becomes apparent.
- Expanded the value and interconnections of my second-degree network. I frequently find that connecting a long-ago introduction to another one of my connections will help add immense value to both of them.

These serendipitous moments have happened enough times that for me to know it is not just a coincidence and that there is real value – both intrinsic and tangible – to taking this advice to heart and learning to practice it.

It can be difficult at times. I was initially skeptical: why would I meet with him or her? I'm busy, and this doesn't dovetail with my immediate strategic or tactical needs or goals. Don't distract me from my immediate successes!

But I stopped and thought about it. The people whom I respect and trust have a reason to introduce me to people. That reason may only be clear to them. And sometimes, it may only be clear to the Universe. And it may not become clear to any of us for a long time.

So, take the time. Everyone has thirty minutes to meet with someone. And in that time, listen. Ask as many questions as you can. That's how you will understand and synthesize what someone has to offer and what you can learn from them. That's how you can mentally bookmark this new connection for the future.

Today, I marvel that my network is comprised of people – quality, remarkable, 'curated' people – in a noticeably broad spectrum of industries and geographies and skillsets.

Another reason you never want to turn down an introduction no matter how orthogonal it may seem to your path, is because I guarantee you that your path may surprise you.

I never expected to start a company and move out of Silicon Valley. The seeds I planted along my path and throughout my network through all the years of my career have popped up at just the right places and times in this journey. It's a joy to make a call and reconnect with someone and explain that you've ended up somewhere unexpected and find there are new synergies to explore.

I wouldn't be where I am with the progress of my company and career if I hadn't taken that advice and embraced meeting with and learning from as many unexpected people as I have.

You never know who you'll meet, but trust that it will be for a reason.

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