

Reactivating muscle memory

Train yourself to rebuild network connections as part of retirement

Transitioning from an intense, all-on corporate leadership role to retirement requires executives to alter well-entrenched patterns of behavior. The most obvious and often most feared change is around time and deciding where to channel energies.

Calendars controlled by elusive electronic schedulers go away. While there is great relief from the addiction to the almighty Outlook, some find themselves knotted up at the prospect of needing to make the determination of where to spend their time.

Reaching out

Because this transition is all about what's next, focus not on what is being left behind but in what lies ahead. This is where reactivating old muscle memory becomes important and frankly, necessary.

One of our most-used muscles, well-trained and sculpted in our early-career days, that are once again so important in the pre-, during and post-transition phases, is networking. The future is all about relationships that matter — and connecting with people who can be helpful to your bridging to things that interest you.

It's amazing how extensive our networks are when we stop to really think about it. Friends. Family. Current or former customers. Parents of our children's friends you used to talk to on the sidelines of the games. The community attached to your new in-laws, all of whom you met at "the wedding."

You really know a lot of people, and each person is connected to other people, organizations and interesting possibilities.

Recondition your networking muscles

As we become more senior in our jobs and roles, our "networking muscles" atrophy.

We become accustomed to people seeking us out because of our positional power and status in the company or community. We don't have to expend much effort to be sought out by others and become the

instant center of attention.

It all happens subtly over time, but one side effect is that we rarely exercise our networking muscles proactively.

This is one area of significant change when you transition out of the senior corporate role. You will have fewer regular instances of being the magnet to which all of the nails get automatically pulled. Rather, you now need to use your magnetism to purposefully and intentionally connect with others.

Thankfully, you should find your muscle memory to be excellent in this area, and the entire experience can be incredibly reinforcing.

Connecting through all means

The modalities for reconnecting, or for making new connections, are many: social media, email, LinkedIn, etc. And of course there is the old-fashioned phone call, welcomed by most in the genre of today's transitioning executives.

Allow yourself to think outside the box as you contemplate whom might be interesting for you to connect with or meet — and how you might go about making that happen.

The same muscles you used to "win friends and influence people" earlier in your career will be richly rewarded in your next season, too. You just might need a "few trips to the gym" to rebuild those muscles. Happy conditioning! ●



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My Next Season: changing the way executives transition from long-standing corporate careers to their next phases of life.