

Warming Up a Cold Contact

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Instead of regretting the connections you've failed to tend, try these tips for rekindling your relationship with a cold contact.

Recently, I was talking with a lawyer about his contacts and potential targets for new business. He told me one of his law school friends had recently become the general counsel of a Fortune 10 company ... but that they hadn't talked in more than 20 years. He added, "I wish I'd stayed in touch."

This is one of the countless stories I've heard over the years where someone expresses regret about a relationship that hasn't been tended. Maintaining contacts should not just be about future business potential, of course, but it is a fact that business often springs from close relationships.

What Can You Do to Warm Up Cold Contacts?

So, what can be done about reviving relationships when time has passed? First, it depends on the original strength and foundation of the relationship. Were you college roommates? Former colleagues? Best friends in high school? On the board of an organization together?

Second, it depends on the length of time that has transpired. If just a few years have passed, it will be easier. If it has been a decade or more, it will be more difficult so you should [analyze your motivation](#) — do you miss the person in your life?

Bottom line: If you had a close relationship and a common bond, you can (try to) rekindle the relationship — and probably should. Here are some thoughts.

1. Reach Out.

For professionals, LinkedIn is a perfect medium. Add a note to the invitation to connect, for example: "I was thinking about you [true] and feel badly we haven't stayed in touch." If it was a more personal relationship, another social media platform may be better.

2. Be Honest.

Why are you getting back in touch? If where they have landed interests you, say something like, "I didn't realize you had moved to XYZ Corporation. I'd love to hear about your new position." If your reason is more personal, express those sentiments.

3. Be Sincere.

Business may come down the road, of course, but the immediate goal is to catch up and reestablish contact.

4. Use Natural Activities.

If you want to resurrect law school contacts, get involved in the alumni group for your class and use your position to get back in touch with people. If they were involved in an outside activity, like soccer, start a rec team and invite your old friends to join you. If you were related through a professional organization, offer to meet up at the next meeting or conference of the group in which you are both involved.

5. Employ Arm's-length Business Development Methods.

For contacts with a business element, it's important to use resources that will be perceived as valuable. Follow the person or company on social media or do some research to determine potential areas of interest. Then you can send salient alerts, invitations to programs, or research results that are helpful.

6. Give It Time.

While some relationships can be picked up right where they left off, many will need a slower approach. If you let a relationship languish for years, it may take years to fully repair. Some may flourish; others may not.

It Isn't Always Easy to Maintain Relationships

The life of a lawyer is challenging. The demands of family and work along with other commitments make it easy for contacts to slowly drift away.

However, one of the most important assets for lawyers in private practice is their network. You should try not to let authentic relationships get cold in the first place, but if they do, don't be afraid to make sincere efforts to revive them.