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**Using Social Networks to Get Business – AKA "The Kevin Bacon Game"**

**By Lois Carter Fay**

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A few years ago there was a big push toward one-to-one relationship management, creating a network of trusted business associates on whom you could rely. Getting to know them, up close and personal. Or at least using software to generate personalized messages. And getting to know your prospects and customers is, of course, still a very good practice...probably your best way to succeed.

But in the impersonal world of computers and technology, getting personal is a difficult thing to do. You may have never met your client or the folks you joint venture a project with. But it's likely that you have communicated via email, perhaps spoken on the phone, read articles they've written or kept up with what they have said in discussion forums.

**Making it Personal**

Now there's the many-to-many approach, more commonly called social networking. Of course you've heard of Match.com, primarily designed to connect those who are interested in dating. For this membership site you don't need to be "invited" in and you can try it out for free.

Quickly, many other such sites have jumped into the social networking arena, garnering tons of publicity. There's Friendster, LinkedIn, Ryze, Tribe Software, Orkut, MeetUp and probably others. The "market" has virtually exploded with companies that create networks to help you connect through others with the people you want to meet or do business with.

**Kevin Bacon**

If you're a follower of the TV show Friends, you'll know the characters on the show played "The Kevin Bacon Game," in which they had to connect Kevin Bacon to another famous person in six or fewer connections.

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For instance, Cuba Gooding, Jr. is in Home on the Range with Judi Dench, who is also working with Roseanne on Home on the Range, who worked with John Goodman on the Roseanne Show, who worked with Dan Akroyd on Saturday Night Live, who worked with Jim Belushi on Saturday Night Live, who was John Belushi's brother, who worked with Kevin Bacon on the film Animal House.

It's a variation of the old "6 Degrees of Separation" theory that has been around forever. And it's a lot like the new social networks.

### Creating Your Network

Most of these social networking groups create networks based on various common interests and for some, on trusted connections—which is much greater help to business folks. LinkedIn and Orkut are this type of network. You create your network link by link by link so your social network is bound to be a

higher quality network than one in which anyone can join and contact anyone in the network.

Here are the websites for the social networks I mentioned:

www.Match.com  
www.Friendster.com  
www.Linkedin.com  
www.Ryze.com  
www.Tribe.net  
www.Orkut.com  
www.Meetup.com

If you sign up for my marketing newsletter, MarketingIdeaShop Brainy Tidbits, delivered each week by email directly to your inbox, you'll find tons more resources and marketing ideas that you can put right to work. Visit <http://www.marketingideashop.com> and sign up on the site. Get "67 Ways to Promote Your Business" FREE by return email.

## **A Conspiracy of Kindness**

**By Steve Goodier**

### A CONSPIRACY OF KINDNESS

My friend Randy Jessen tells this true story of love and kindness. It is a little longer than our usual fare, but I think you will find it well worth reading!

If you had to choose one word to describe Kevin, it might be "slow." Kevin didn't learn his ABCs as fast as other kids. He never came in first in the schoolyard races. However, Kevin had a special rapport with people. His bright smile and big heart won him plenty of friends.

When Kevin discovered that the pastor at his church, Randy Jessen, was putting together a boys

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basketball team, his mother let him participate. And soon basketball became a center of Kevin's life. He worked hard at practice. While the other boys practiced dribbling and lay-ups, Kevin shot baskets. He had a special spot near the free throw line. He threw and threw the ball, and it occasionally went in! When that happened, Kevin raised his arms and shouted, "Look at me, Coach!"

The day before their first game, Coach Randy gave each player a bright red jersey. Kevin was number 12. He scrambled himself into the sleeves and wore that jersey almost every day. One Sunday morning, the church service was interrupted by Kevin's excited voice. "Look, Coach!" He lifted his gray wool sweater to reveal the red jersey underneath with number 12 on the front. Nobody minded the interruption; the church knew Kevin and loved him.

I'd like to be able to tell you that the team did well. Actually, they never won a game that season — except for the night it snowed and the other team never showed up. At the end of the season, the boys played in the church league's tournament. As the last-place team, they drew the unfortunate spot of playing against the first-place team — boys who had never lost a game all year.

The game went as expected, and near the end of the fourth quarter Kevin's team stood nearly 30 points behind. It was then that one of the boys called timeout. "Coach," he said, "this is our last game and Kevin's never made a basket. I think we should let him make a basket." The team agreed. Kevin was instructed to stand at his special place near the free throw line and wait. He was told that when he was given the ball, he should shoot.

Kevin was ecstatic. He ran to the floor and waited. When the ball was passed to him he shot — and missed. Number 17 from the other team snatched the rebound, dribbled down the court for an easy lay-up. But a moment later Kevin got the ball again. He shot — and missed. Number 17 repeated his performance for another two points. Kevin shot a third and fourth time with the same result.

But then the other team seemed to figure out what was going on and the next time they snatched the rebound, they threw it to Kevin! Kevin shot...and missed. But now every rebound came to him and he threw and threw toward the basket.

BOTH teams had circled Kevin by this time and all of the boys were shouting, "Kevin! Kevin!" The crowd took up the chant. Soon everyone in the gym was shouting for Kevin! Coach Randy was sure the game should have been over by this time and he glanced at the clock. It was stopped at 4.3

seconds! The timekeepers were standing by their table shouting with the crowd, "Kevin! Kevin!" The world had stopped for Kevin. He shot and shot and finally one of his shots took a crazy bounce on the rim and...went in! Chaos reigned! Everyone stood and cheered as if one boy had single-handedly won a world championship. Kevin's arms sprang up in the air and he shouted, "I won! I won!" His team escorted him off the court, the clock ticked down and the game was over.

That day an undefeated team retained their perfect record. But everybody won. Everybody! Because everybody had participated in a crazy conspiracy of kindness, a simple act of mercy, that was so compelling, so powerful, that I'm sure all of heaven rejoiced!

Steve Goodier

is a professional speaker, consultant and author of

numerous books. Visit his site for more information, or to sign up for his FREE newsletter of Life, Love and Laughter at



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