

Strategy: $20 \times 12 = 240$

Here's the most important metric in your professional life: $20 \times 12 = 240$. Now, what does that mean? It means you work about 20 days a month and you work more or less 12 months—maybe 11 if you're a European; we can take the 240 down to 220—at any rate, 220 or 240 is the number of potential useful lunches per year. And I really believe, within limits—and I'll explain the limits—never waste a lunch.

You have 240 opportunities, if you're in accounting, to spend time with a person in purchasing; 240 opportunities to deal with a frayed relationship; 240 opportunities to build on a relationship that's in pretty good shape. Look, the good news is, 96 percent of you like most of the people you work with, and you like going to lunch with them. And I'm not going to stand here like Simon Legree, cracking a whip over your head and say, "Don't waste a single lunch."

I am going to say if all 240 of those lunches, or 219, or 186, are with the same group of people, then you are being an idiot, or you sure as heck aren't taking advantage of the potential. I believe that lunch is the most powerful tool you have. Go with somebody interesting and different. Go out with a client. Go out with a prospective client. Build on something. Fix something that's in trouble. Whatever it is—don't waste many lunches. Most powerful tool you've got.