



Pt. II – A World of Open Contacts: 20+ Ways to Exercise Your Digital Risk Muscle by Curt Bonk

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For the **TWIO** book, I relied on many tactics. Below are 20 methods I used or thought about using. These might be beneficial for you someday. I did not really use #21 though I did check out a few old websites of mine. Keep in mind that I likely had 20 more approaches that I am not listing here.

1. **Brainstorm a List of Known Information:** The very first thing I did was create a list of people who were well known for the 10 technology trends that had made the world more open (Note: I called these the 10 openers as opposed to Friedman's "flatteners"). I also included the names and emails of those people I personally knew within each opener. I then looked up the emails of people in the list that I still needed. I also asked my friends and colleagues for help when and where I needed it. I do such things all the time. In fact, when I want my students to be creative and think outside the box, I sometimes tell them to sit in a closet with a flashlight and away from all distractions and try to brainstorm such a list.
2. **Keep Adding to the List:** One of the simplest things you can do is to keep adding to the list that you create in #1 above. I have found such a list of names and emails to be invaluable. Over the 2-3 years from initial idea for the **TWIO** to the recent publication of it, mine became quite impressive. The list grows and grows and grows and will come in handy for follow-up book projects.
3. **Direct Searching of the Web:** A second way to find contacts is to simply search the Web. This includes looking in someone's blog for their email address as well as in their Facebook accounts, homepages, research articles, keynote speeches, and published correspondences. If a person has a Web presence or footprint, you will more than likely locate their email. Most professors and international speakers are easy to find.
4. **Indirect Searching of the Web:** Some people are very high up in an organization or institution and do not have time to respond to hundreds of emails each day. As a precaution or security measure, their email is typically not posted anywhere that would be obvious. But you might spot it in strange places. Just go to Google Search and type in the name of the person and the word "email" and you might be surprised what shows up. Sometimes the email is embedded in a discussion forum. This tends to happen when someone

posts a query wondering about it and titles it “Does anyone know Steve Jobs’ email?” and then an assortment of people respond to it; most often with guesses based on the name (e.g., steve@mac.com, steve@apple.com, theboss@appl.ecom, Steve.jobs@apple.com, sjobs@apple.com, jobs@apple.com or createdmanyjobs@apple.com). It is amazing what you can find when you do some searching of discussion forums (see these discussions related to Steve Jobs’ email, for instance, <http://forums.appleinsider.com/archive/index.php/t-60371.html> or this one, <http://www.applefritter.com/node/8969>, or <http://forums.macrumors.com/archive/index.php/t-162031.html>). Bill Gates, Linus Torvalds, Tim Berners-Lee., no problem. I saw a discussion of a friend of mine with a very famous computer scientist and was able to obtain his email that way. Keep in mind, that while you might locate their email address, each of these people likely get 1,000’s of such requests per day and they have likely changed it or will never reply to it. Suffice to say, obtaining an email is no guarantee of actual access. But if you find the right access code (i.e., the semi-secret email that the person currently uses), it just might get you a response.

5. Ask an Expert: If you are seeking the email of someone and you know someone else in that same field or at the same company or organization, ask him or her if they know the email of person you are after. I got the email address of a founder of a Fortune 100 company whom you would likely recognize from a former employee of the company whom I had known for a long time. He was wonderful! He not only gave me some insightful quotes for the book, he ended up writing a fantabulous endorsement. The same was true of several foundation directors, university presidents, and bestselling authors. Many emails of those who endorsed by book were provided to me by their friends and colleagues.

6. Try to Email “Info,” “Support,” or “Help”: If you have trouble locating an email address of someone, one of the last resorts you have is to the dreaded “support,” “help,” or “info” email address that is typically listed at the project, center, or organization Web site. But if that is all you have, it is all you have. I have been able to contact a few important people this way.

7. Talk about It: I meet people when at conferences before and after my keynote talks. Sometimes I mention my book project in small conversations with vendors, conference keynotes, or colleagues at the conference. Once in a while, someone will say that they know the person I am seeking to contact. It happened with Marc Andreessen (the creator and founder of Netscape and, more recently, Ning). A vendor I met a year ago told me he was good friends with Andreessen and provided me with two emails I could use to contact him. Unfortunately, he has yet to write me back. But I tried. I exercised my risk muscle.

8. Create a Personal Challenge: In the book, “The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich,” Timothy Ferriss talks about challenge he created for students at Princeton. He offered a roundtrip ticket to anywhere in the world if anyone got a reply from people who seemed quite impossible to reach like Bill Clinton, J.Lo, or J. D. Salinger. They had to get a response to one of three questions. The first time he tried this at Princeton, no one was able to do it. The second time 6 of 17 people did. Instead of being content with a normal life routine like 9 to 5 jobs, Ferriss recommends setting unrealistic goals. To reach out. To try. To stretch that risk muscle. Perhaps make it a personal challenge wherein if you get 3 of the 10 hardest to get emails on your list, you treat yourself to a mini-vacation, bottle of the best champagne you can find, or new clothes. But be prepared for failure. I tried to a former U.S. president and vice president as well as a well known founder of a computer company to endorse my book. None of them did but I got a response from their office managers and secretaries, two of which

encouraged me to send a final copy of the book when done. As a result, they are all soon getting signed copies of my book. Sometimes an email helps get you to a secretary or office manager. Sometimes all you have is a physical address of their foundation or other organization or institution and you must send a letter or package to that address via snail mail. Replies to that letter provide you with a foot in the door.

9. Attend Conference, Institute, or Author Book Signing: If the person whose story or quote you need is a keynote, plenary, or invited speaker at a particular conference that is coming up, you always have the option of attending the conference and then greeting him or her before or after the talk. You might hand this person your business card and ask for one from him or her. You might be so bold so as to write to him or her (if you have the requisite contact information) to meet for a breakfast, lunch, or dinner during the conference. You also might check their book Website for their book promotion schedule and then attend a book signing or “meet the author” session at a conference or in a local bookstore. I attended a talk of a well known technology reviewer for the New York Times when I was a plenary speaker at the Georgia Educational Technology Conference in November 2007. I opened correspondence with him recently by reminding him that I attended his keynote talk and was also an invited speaker at that conference. While he has yet to write back, I at least gave it a shot.

10. Collect Business Cards: Anyone who gives you a business card is a potential expert that you can contact nearly any day and at any moment of the day. They can open the email from you if they want and when and where they want. But you now have an open license to contact them for relevant and professional matters. Collect business cards when at conferences. They might come in handy. Asking for a business card and then reading through it carefully is a sign of respect, especially in the Asian culture. You might also have one of yours ready (such as in your pocket, purse, bag, or wallet) to give to someone you want to contact later. I often have business cards on me in 3-4 locations (shirt pocket, pants pocket, suit pocket and computer bag). When you hand him or her your business card, typically they will give one back. If they do not, you can always say, “I would love yours as well if you have one handy.” I often fly back home from a conference and sort through the business cards I have collected by region of the world or employment sector. This location- or sector-based organizational method helps me later on in contacting the experts that I need for my book.

Check back in tomorrow for tips 11-20 in “A World of Open Contacts, Pt. III!”

← A World of Open Contacts: 20+ Ways to Exercise Your Digital Risk Muscle, Pt. I by Curt Bonk

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