



## Pt. III – 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 methods #11-22 I used or thought about using.

11. **Ask a Friend to Collect a Business Card:** I was able to secure the email address of the most important person I needed for my book when a close friend of mine said she would be with him on a panel in Korea. In a way, this one business card triggered the whole book project, so it was anything but minor.

12. **Save Emails in Outlook:** Whatever email system you are using, you should be sure to save the email addresses and names of important people when others share them with you or when you happen to correspond with them. You might be cc'd on an email wherein that person is also copied. Save their email! You may need it someday. You might also find an email in an article you are reading online or in print. When you do, save it. Over time, the list of emails accrues.

13. **Post Comment to Expert Blog or Facebook Account:** Sometimes the person you desperately need an email for has a blog. If it is a public blog, you can often reply to this person's most recent blog post and explain your situation while asking for her email address or other contact information (e.g., Facebook, MSN, or Skype account). A post to a blog is more personal. The chances of a response are at best 50-50. I have found that replies to a message sent to experts in Facebook or LinkedIn who are your friends are much higher than replies to a blog comment. Not too surprisingly, the famous person may not read comments and replies to his or her blog. So, I recommend you try to become a friend of a person in Facebook or LinkedIn before submitting a request for an interview or a paper that person has written.

14. **Post in Status in Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace:** You might post an updated "status" report within your personal Facebook account that you need someone's email or other contact information. Alternatively, you could send an email to your network in LinkedIn or Facebook indicating any connections or contact information you may need. Your social network can often provide it.

15. **Create a Group:** You can create a group in Ning, Facebook, Yahoo! Groups, MSN Groups, or Google Groups related to the your book or a specific topic within it. Those who join the group might be key

informants in the network. Malcolm Gladwell talks about the importance of salespeople, mavens, and connectors in getting ideas in and out of a group. Mavens who join your Google Group can provide everyone with the information they need, whereas connectors can lead you to the people you want to connect to. You might also be so bold as to create a fan group of sorts for the famous person in question and, at some point, ask members of that group for the contact information that they may have on him or her.

16. **Pay for Email Address Services:** Some services appear where you search for a particular email. Some are geared for celebrity emails. In some cases, you may have to resort to paying for email addresses (and perhaps the physical address as well). I have never paid for one and I do not recommend it. If the celebrity has her email on a list somewhere that people are paying for, you can be pretty sure that she will have changed it.

17. **Ask Your Publicist or Publisher:** Publicists and publishers handle many book projects and promotions, and, as a result, they contact and correspond with countless people you will never know. Tell your publicist or publisher the name of the person you need to contact for and see what they say.

18. **Hire Someone:** You might hire someone to continue to search the Web and other sources for the email contact(s) of people you are striking out in finding. Your time is valuable. Hire someone at a reasonable rate to do this. For instance, I hired my son, Alex, to do such final checking of emails. He got me the address of Angus King, the former governor of Maine. King, when governor, had sponsored a groundbreaking and nationally-recognized laptop program in Maine. This project got every seventh and eighth grade student in the state a laptop, regardless of location or family income. This project was intended to make Maine's students among the most computer literate in the world. While I ended up not using his email (not yet anyhow), it was great to get that address just in case. Now perhaps I can still use it as I create the e-book extension to the **TWIO**. What a great idea! I forgot I had this one.

19. **Collect Additional Emails:** I also collected emails of professors who had used Thomas Friedman's, *The World Is Flat* book, in their classes based on their posted online syllabi. I also gathered emails of those who had blogged or written reviews of his book as well as those who simply referred to it in articles they published. To do this, I paid someone to spend a week or so collecting thousands of additional emails in Excel files. I could review the list and look for emerging trends as well as people I knew. I knew that these people likely had some of the contact details I needed.

20. **Contact Media People and Writers:** While unlikely, sometimes you can obtain the contact information of a famous person from someone who has written about him or her. I tried this approach a couple of times and contacted media people whose articles I used in my book. I could tell them that I found their article valuable for my project (which is true). If we got to know each other well enough, I might ask how they contacted the expert or well known person that they reference in their article or book and ask for advice in how I might also do that. It helps if you know that writer or media person. Along these same lines, if you have friends in the media industry, they might also be able to help you out.

21. **Bonus #1: Try the Wayback Machine from the Internet Archive:** One idea that I did not try out is to explore old websites using the Wayback Machine from the Internet Archive (see <http://www.archive.org/index.php>). Assuming that the famous person once had his or her email posted (perhaps before becoming famous), with the Wayback Machine you can search old websites from 5 of 10

or nearly 15 years ago (1996 is the initial year listed) and see if his or her email was posted then. If it pops up and is still active, great! If not, well, it did not require much risk muscle. It is pretty harmless. All that is required is creativity in your search process and patience in waiting for sites you search for to come up.

22. Bonus #2: Google Cached and Similar Pages: Sometimes a website no longer works, is being attached and is running slow, or is offline. You can still click on “cached” pages and find the data you are searching for. In effect, to help searchers like you out, Google takes a snapshot of each page it examines and then caches or stores that version as a back-up for you. It uses the cached version of the document to determine if that page matches your query. Clicking on the cached content not only helps with finding emails but with articles you need to access for your book. I used this option several times for the **TWIO** book. Clicking on the “similar” button might also lead you to valuable resources.

So there you have it—20+ ways to obtain the email of an expert or famous person. I am not suggesting you do anything unethical or questionable. There are limits. And there is sometimes a fine-line between research digging for an email and crossing too far into someone’s personal space. Please respect your fellow human beings. Think of what approaches you would find fair, moral, and ethical before trying any approach that might be deemed crossing that boundary zone.

Next, to obtain the quote, feedback, resources, endorsement, or review that you want, you have to figure out how to use any email and physical addresses you have gathered in a kind and gentle way. Be respectful. At the same time, be enthusiastic. You might ask that person to review the story that you have written about him or her to be sure it is complete and accurate. You should try to place an accurate yet unique and inviting subject in your email contact. For instance, while a title like my book poses many challenges to me as the writer, when I placed “The World Is Open endorsement request” in the subject line of my email, I got many responses that I would not have otherwise obtained. I was specific and honest. If I had just said, “Book Endorsement Request,” many of these emails would have been deleted immediately. Be creative yet genuine in your subject lines!

I have contacted hundreds of people during the past two years since I first starting working on the **TWIO** project. I have received feedback, of one type or another from most of them. That has made each day much more exciting than it would have been otherwise. You need courage. You also need the skills of how to contact people in the open world. Some of the tips above can make it happen. Please send me an email if you have additional ways to get in touch with someone that I have not thought of or listed above (my personal homepage is <http://mypage.iu.edu/~cjbonk/>).

I hope you have enjoyed my blog posts this week. I also look forward to hearing from some of you about my **TWIO** book (see <http://worldisopen.com/>). It was a huge undertaking. Now with a second one nearly done that will be a free e-book extension, I think I can say that my digital risk muscle has been exercised more in the past few years than ever before in my life. I recommend you exercise yours too. Happy readings and travels!



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