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Making THE CONNECTION

For so many of us, networking with others doesn't come easy. A lot of entrepreneurs, business people, and those who just want to make connections with others of shared interests are often unsure about where to start and how they can network effectively.

“Connecting with the right people can make all the difference, no matter what you're trying to accomplish.”

One common misconception about networking is that it's just for those who are entrepreneurial-minded or who want to grow their business. The fact is, it's a powerful tool for anyone who wants to make an important connection for virtually any reason.

It's still a great tool for the up-and-coming entrepreneur looking to make a start and a few impressions, but it's also a great tool for people who want to reach out to their community to bring attention to a good cause, or even a church or school event. Or maybe you're trying to buy a home and you're looking to make a few connections in the area where the home is located.

No matter what you want to get out of networking, it's rarely an easy thing to initiate without some level of guidance. You may have turned to online social networking sites such as LinkedIn or Facebook and weren't thrilled with the results. Online or off, we run into many of the same challenges in finding the right people to connect with — and then successfully making that connection.

Connecting with the right people can make all the difference, no matter what you're trying to accomplish. A friend of mine, Christopher Kai, knows a thing or two about networking. I've turned to him on more than one occasion for advice, and I thought I'd share a little bit about him.

Christopher is the author of "Big Game Hunting," a book all about networking. As the name implies, the book looks at those "bigger" connections (billionaires, executives, and celebrities) — connections that can be extra-challenging to achieve. Basically, it's about connecting with people who have influence.

But the book goes beyond connecting with influential people. It's a look at how you can make connections that will enrich your life, whether you want to make professional



Christopher Kai and Me

connections, or connections that have more impact in your personal life.

That's really the importance of networking. While some people are interested in making a sale or networking strictly as a form of doing business, others look for something more substantial — a way they can enrich their life or the lives of others. When you want to make a positive change in any aspect of your life, networking with the right people can put you on the track to the kind of success you want.

Our team strives for this very ideal. We cherish every opportunity we have to enrich the lives of others in the work we do. We're here to provide nothing but stellar service and to leave you feeling like you've made a connection you can count on.

- Erik Brown

A VALENTINE'S GETAWAY

Escape to Northern Lights Lodge

Experience winter as it's meant to be experienced. In northern Minnesota, in the land of 10,000 lakes, rests the quaint Northern Lights Lodge & Resort. Tucked away in the woods of Superior National Forest on the eastern shores of Bear Island Lake, there are few places that offer this kind of peace.

And that's what makes Northern Lights the perfect Valentine's Day getaway. It's just you, your significant other, and nature. Reserve one of the resort's seven cabins for unparalleled tranquility to unwind and enjoy the company of the one you love.

Then go on your own winter adventure. Explore the woods, go dog sledding, snowmobiling, sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, ice fishing — any winter activity you can think of. Pick your pace and go. Once you've spent a day filled with wintry fun, make a warm cup of hot chocolate and cozy up by the fire with your loved one.

The resort, about four hours north of the twin cities and near the town of Ely, receives an average of 80 inches



of snow every year, so you're always guaranteed the quintessential Minnesota winter experience. With seven cabins to choose from during the winter, you can find one that best fits your needs, from one-, two-, and three-bedroom cabins.

Can't make it during the winter? The lodge and surrounding area are equally breathtaking year-round, so you can't go wrong when you decide to make the trip up north. For more information, be sure to check out the resort's website at www.northern-lights-lodge.com to plan your escape.

The National Real Estate Market IN 2016

WILL THIS YEAR BE ANOTHER GOOD YEAR?

Across the nation, the real estate market saw a fairly normal January. Realtor.com reports that, for the most part, markets followed the typical yearly patten for mid-winter. The inventory of homes on the market remained relatively small, while potential homebuyers took their time, looking toward spring and summer to make their move.

There are strong indications that potential buyers are ready to go. Current data suggest that people are actively looking at what is available on the market, but with the combination of winter weather and low inventory, they have plenty of incentive to wait.

With the yearly market cycles, buyers traditionally benefit from waiting until spring and summer. With each month leading into

mid-year, home inventories will grow, giving buyers the options they're looking for.

Even with slower sales in January, real estate analysts expect 2016 to be another growth year. Last year, the market saw steady growth, even into December 2015. According to the Re/Max January 2016 National Housing Report, December 2015 home sales were up 6.1 percent and the median home sale price was up 5.3 percent over the previous year. At the same time, homes remained on the market for an average of 67 days.

The Re/Max report also indicated Boise, Idaho saw some of the highest home sales increases in the country, up 23.8 percent over the previous December. Manchester, New Hampshire trailed close behind with a jump of 22.9 percent.



With a good year forecast for 2016, many in the real estate industry are keeping a close eye on millennials, those in their 20s and 30s. Millennials have traditionally been slow to enter the real estate market, instead preferring to rent or stay at home. Now, with the market shifting and the economy slowly improving, they are taking a look at home buying and realizing, as the economy improves, that it's a realistic option.

AN LA CRAFTSMAN BECOMES A CULTURAL CLASSIC



When it comes to homes in Los Angeles, you won't find many with more style than the Gordon L. McDonough House. The Craftsman home and certified Historic Cultural Monument #417 was built in 1908 by well-known architect Frank M. Tyler and named for the U.S. congressman who lived in the home.

The 2,840-square-foot, five-bedroom home is dominated by exposed brick façades and rich hardwood throughout. More recently, the home was fully renovated in a dedicated effort to return the home to its original 1900s charm — with great success. You'll find breathtaking woodwork in every room, including exposed beams in the dining room and a mantelpiece that is a sight to behold. Every design choice calls back to the first years of the 20th century.

One of the most remarkable features about the home is its location. It sits between Los Angeles and Santa Monica, so it's literally in the middle of everything: Hollywood, downtown, and the beach. No matter which direction you go, you'll find something extraordinary.

And it gets better. Because the home is a certified Historic Cultural Monument, it's part of the Mills Act Property Tax Abatement Program, an incentive program that offers homeowners a significantly reduced property tax if the homeowner agrees to maintain the "historical and architectural character" of the home.

What would you expect to pay for a home like this near downtown Los Angeles? Large for the area and sitting on about a quarter acre, the home costs \$950,000.

Are You Cluttered? Take the Quiz!

Many of us live in a cluttered space and don't even realize it. We go about our daily lives as clutter piles up around us, one item at a time. How do you know when you're cluttered? Take the "Am I Cluttered?" quiz to find out!

1. Do you have a lot of ambition and great ideas, but feel like you spend most of your time creating to-do lists without ever accomplishing anything on them?
2. Do you spend money purchasing items you know you probably have around but don't have the time to search for?
3. Do you incur late fees because you can't find your bills or remember to pay them?
4. Have you ever wasted money purchasing something at the last minute, buying more of an item than necessary because you didn't know how much you had left of that thing at home or at work?
5. If a disaster occurred, would you know what to grab in 10 minutes or less and where those items are?

6. Do you dread tax season every year when you have to take out that shoe box of receipts and spend days tallying everything up for your accountant?

7. Do your systems of organization last less than a day because you forget to follow through with them or they are too complicated?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you may be suffering from the effects of the all-too-common Cluttered Space. You are not alone, and it is not too late to retake control of your life.

Want to know more about regaining control of your home and life? **Creating Clarity** can help! They are the organization experts. Visit www.creating-clarity.com or call **818-445-9489** and take your first step into a new world, free of clutter and stress.

Creating Clarity, LLC
1976 S. La Cienega Blvd. Suite 138
Los Angeles, CA 90034



Pamela Morency,
Creating Clarity Owner

A GREAT INVESTMENT IDEA?

Would you like to print money? We've helped dozens of guests make money in real estate via investing. There are so many models, from renovations, new construction, rental property, wholesaling, and partnerships ... the list goes on and on. Last year we saw a client make a 50 percent return on his investment in 12 months! We've had numerous clients make double-digit returns year over year. Why not you? Connect anytime at homes@themidcoastgroup.com.

