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Chances are that if you are reading this book you are currently in a process of assessment. You may be facing a challenge—a career interruption or transition, a new life stage, or perhaps a financial difficulty—that you are trying to overcome. Or you may be working toward a specific goal in your personal or professional life and need to find the missing link that will take you into the final stretch.

If you are one of the millions who are aspiring to do better—in work, relationships, and financial growth—you have probably found that the process of assessment is a constant companion, and making a change in one area of your life inevitably calls for an evaluation of others. I have gone through this process enough times, during career moves and relationship bumps, to know that in order to make a positive change you need to have a sense of your overall net worth. And by “net worth,” I don’t mean the status of your financial accounts.

I believe in the power of social capital to improve your productivity, expand your professional options, and raise your overall quality of life. I believe that seeking out and working in
collaboration with others who share your interests and values will provide a stronger foundation, enabling you to reach a higher level of success than you would on your own. I believe in the power of connections, not just between people but between passion and productivity, between value and profit, between authenticity and purpose, and ultimately between your heart and your wallet. Therefore, I believe that your “net worth” will be based not on the size of your portfolio but on your ability to define and stay true to your passions and values and that working with other people who share them will allow you to build a strong and enduring interpersonal safety net that will carry you through any financial calamity to greater output and personal fulfillment.

In *Your Network Is Your Net Worth*, I will show you how to unlock the hidden power of connections. And I will show you why your social capital, or your ability to build a network of authentic personal and professional relationships, not your financial capital, is the most important asset in your portfolio. I will show you why your net worth should be measured based on relationships, happiness, productivity, and job satisfaction and not solely in dollars and cents.

I will explain why strengthening and growing your network is the fastest way to improve your real net worth. For years, net worth was a quantified number or a collection of assets. In *Your Network Is Your Net Worth*, I will show you why investing in your network is the new model for improving your real net worth.

This kind of worth—wealth as interpersonal creative riches—is at the heart of my approach to networking. Fortunately, the postindustrial, information-age economy that has so profoundly altered the way we build our worth has also provided us with countless new tools to do so. In this book I will show you how I, along with other entrepreneurs and business leaders, have used these tools creatively to build our networks to achieve happiness, success, and true wealth.
In *Your Network Is Your Net Worth*, I will give you clear steps, tools, and ideas to use to build and grow your network. The process of connecting to like-minded people for pleasure and profit, though timeless in concept, has, since the rise of information technology, altered dramatically in methods and potential. The days of mandatory reading of the daily newspapers or bestseller lists to impress someone at a cocktail party, sharing the latest office gossip to bond with a colleague, or controlling your subordinates as you claw your way to the top are past. We’ve entered a new era where shifting cultural values and improved technology enable us to network in vastly improved, more focused, and more enjoyable ways that are more in tune with our personalities and passions.

The old way to network involved climbing a ladder while pushing others down or to the side for individual benefit. The past was about competition, pursuit of materialism and “keeping up with the Joneses.” Networking was all about your position in the game and the number of degrees on your résumé or titles placed after your name. This process worked for some people, to be sure, but not for most. Thankfully, networking has evolved from a transactional game into a transformational process. It’s not just about “who you know,” it’s about “who you are becoming as a person.” The new way to network and build your true net worth is about charting your own course, living life based on your passions, and being the best you can be. In today’s world, what’s important is no longer about power plays but more about what you value and how—and with whom—you want to get there.

Another reason that having a strong network is important is that how we work, along with the role of the employer, has been completely transformed. Globalization, changes in digital technology, and a wavering economy have made tens of millions of corporate positions more contingent and less secure. A 2010
Deloitte survey found that nearly half of all employees say a loss of trust in their employers will cause them to look for a new job when the economy improves. What’s more, between 1999 and 2010, the share of workers who said they were satisfied with their job dropped from 59 percent to 25 percent. The reality is that no matter how much you like your job or your company, you can, at any given time, be forced into unemployment.

With few workplace guarantees, it’s important to recognize your best path to job security is yourself. The more adaptive, flexible, and agile you are, the more you’ll succeed. Look internally, not externally, for happiness and job security. Build your skill sets, improve your network, ask questions, and don’t assume that others will take charge of your career.

There is a bright lining to the new model of networking, employment, and globalization. Millions of determined professionals are now creating and fueling a dynamic and innovative new culture of entrepreneurship and virtual teams free from the constraints of the old corporate culture. In Your Network Is Your Net Worth, I will share stories that demonstrate how technology has accelerated how we connect and reduced the degree of separation between people. Whether you are excited or discouraged by the bewildering array of social media choices, Your Network Is Your Net Worth will illustrate how and why technology and social media can help improve your networking productivity and how you can use them wisely.

When I learned to express my own voice and started using today’s tools, I broke through to a new level of creative productivity. Having confidence in who we are and why we matter prepares us to actualize more of our potential by creating a complex, rich web of relationships. These possibilities are richer than ever before in our globally linked, mobile world.

In Networking Smart, Wayne Baker states, “The term
networking elicits strong feelings, positive and negative; some people swear by it, others swear at it.” The approach you’ll learn in Your Network Is Your Net Worth throws many of the existing ideas about networking out the window. If you are willing to focus first on your passions and purpose, I will show you how to reorganize your networking methods, as well as your entire life, around your true beliefs. When you do this, you will discover the kinds of lasting relationships, personal transformation, and, ultimately, tangible wealth that are the only foundations for happiness and success.

If this approach seems overwhelming or foreign, don’t worry. Most likely, you are adapting to the digital and social evolution and you can thrive with a values-based, transformational approach to networking. The core of the approach is looking inside first, outside second. This approach to connecting should not feel like work; instead, it should be life-enhancing and collaborative and ultimately bring you joy and greater prosperity.

Connecting with others with similar values and passions can also increase your feelings of happiness in most cases. An article in Scientific American titled “Your Brain on Facebook: Bigger Social Networks Expand the Size of Neural Networks” by Gary Stix noted, “Lots of ‘friends’ drive the growth of gray matter in areas linked to processing social information.” James Fowler, a professor at UC San Diego, stated in an interview with NPR, “We find that people at the center of the social network tend to be happier. . . . We think the reason why is because those in the center are more susceptible to the waves of happiness that spread throughout the network.”

Connecting and building my network have changed my life. Because of the lessons I’ve learned, I have more friends than I ever imagined possible. I have thousands of Twitter followers and unlimited business contacts, and I’m more productive than ever.
What happened? I turned my weaknesses into opportunities for personal growth. I built my personal brand and started sharing my opinions.

If you are thinking “I’m not like you” or if connecting overwhelms you, you’re not alone. Networking wasn’t always easy for me. When I was younger, I used to hide behind a wineglass and would avoid gatherings if I didn’t feel perfect. In my twenties, I’d stare glassy-eyed at Lifetime docudramas for hours on end, a cone of Ben & Jerry’s in one hand and a cocktail in the other. But then I began to change my life. When I hit thirty, I started first to identify the habits of mind and actions that were holding me back. With self-reflection, practice, and focus, I learned how to authentically connect and build my social capital.

In my story, the straw that broke the camel’s back was a heated argument with a boyfriend at a Halloween party seventeen years ago. I was drunk. He was late. What happened next included an argument, and the end of the night wasn’t pretty. At that point, I did a lot of soul-searching. I went to therapy, and I made changes. It wasn’t always easy, but it’s always been worth it. I had to first learn to value myself and understand the importance of my interests and passions. I had to turn off the docudramas, and I dropped the cocktails. You don’t necessarily need to toss out your Jack Daniel’s to sharpen your connection skills, but you must understand what is holding you back, because if you’re not where you want to be, an honest assessment of the reasons why should come first.

Your path to transformational networking may not be as dramatic as mine, but chances are you’ll relate to some if not my entire story. Your Network Is Your Net Worth details the lessons and skills I have learned on my journey and in twenty-plus years of work experience, rising from an intern to the general manager of an advertising agency and from my post as vice president of
marketing at Virgin America to an in-demand consultant and writer. In addition to my own experience, in this book are inspiring stories about a twenty-year Internet entrepreneur, a military wife, a film director, a young woman battling leukemia, a philanthropist, the CEO of a Major League Baseball team, a politician with dyslexia, a celebrity chef, an art gallery owner, and more.

In *Your Network Is Your Net Worth*, you will learn how to (1) develop a transformational attitude, (2) build a values-based team, and (3) cultivate fields of creativity. I hope my book and my approach to networking will inspire you to transform the way you make connections and help you thrive for years to come.

In the first part, I will show you how you can transform your networking by *developing a transformational attitude*. It introduces five core concepts: finding an authentic foundation, defining a purpose with the Funnel Test, networking with positive productivity, having a Give Give Get attitude, and the benefits of shaking it up. This section focuses on strengthening your inner confidence and self-esteem so you can nurture stronger values-based relationships.

In the second part, you will learn about *building a values-based team*. It introduces four concepts: using three degrees of separation, building your core circle, identifying power pockets, and connecting with hub players. This part details how technology has changed how we communicate, exponentially raising the rate of our interactions and reducing the degree of separation between connections. It shows why unlocking the power of connections is not a solo pursuit but one where you can benefit from understanding the dynamics of your core and secondary relationships.

The final section of *Your Network Is Your Net Worth* includes four chapters designed to help you *cultivate fields of creativity*, thus transforming your networking success. This section shows how
everyone is a producer, the power of reaching critical mass, the ask, and how to know what is most important, your head, heart, or wallet.

I hope *Your Network Is Your Net Worth* will help you find the happiness, focus, prosperity, and success that I have found. Whether you’re looking to improve your connecting skills or secure a new job or just want to understand the benefits of social media, this book is filled with stories, exercises, and tips to help you flourish in today’s evolving world. Remember, building and strengthening your network will help you improve your happiness, productivity, and true net worth. In this global, networked economy, don’t let your social capital lie dormant. Reinvest it!