

## The Social Capitalist: Christine Comaford



Bill Gates calls her “super high bandwidth.” Bill Clinton has thanked her for “fostering American entrepreneurship.” On Christine Comaford’s own website she poses the following question: “Why have 2 American Presidents, 4 billionaires, 700 Fortune 1000 executives, and more than 300 entrepreneurs sought coaching from Christine Comaford Associates?” You will get the answer from Comaford, whose other striking accomplishments include: bestselling author and a seven-year stint as a Buddhist monk.

*Never Eat Alone* co-author Tahl Raz and Christine discussed, among other topics: Networking secrets she learned from Bill Clinton, how to use neuroscience to sell better, three ways to fast-forward your career and personal goals, and essential ways to boost your

credibility and build rapport with power players.

This is an edited transcript from a live Social Capitalist event. The Social Capitalist is sponsored programming of myGreenlight, the only comprehensive on-line learning platform for critical relationship development skills. The interactive interview series is dedicated to delivering in depth discussion on relationship science with the best and brightest thought leaders in business and academia.

**TAHL:** Everybody welcome and hello. My name is Tahl Raz and I’m the cofounder of myGreenlight and host of the Social Capitalist, where we’re bringing you analysis and advice from the people we consider the leaders of this new era of social business.

Now to our guest. She has been a monk. A CEO five times and a venture capitalist, with Google listed as one of her investments. She wrote a well received book named *Rules for Renegades*. Made it to the White House in the Clinton and Bush administrations. And she did it all as a high school dropout. Today she’s a highly sought-after executive coach. Christine has led a remarkable life, undoubtedly with what we hope are some remarkable lessons learned. Christine, welcome!

**CHRISTINE:** Thank you so much Tahl.

**TAHL:** Let’s start out with the unorthodox path that you took without a formal education. Unlike probably nearly all of your clients, right? What did that unorthodox path teach you about people and how to deal with them, those important things that those who took a more conventional path might not have learned.

CHRISTINE: OK, a great question. So here's how I guess I'd summarize it now in hindsight. What I had to figure out at a young age was that rules were general guidelines and that there was a way to navigate through the world of power, business, money, etc. These were social scenes that people weren't talking about, which is why I wrote the book.

I find that once we understand how to navigate the world, the world truly is our oyster. We really can create whatever it is that we want to create. We can be connected to the most powerful people. We can launch amazing projects and get support. So having had that unconventional background was a blessing in disguise because it opened my eyes to the possibility of creating whatever it is you want.

TAHL: Could you get a little more specific about that? I mean, especially as distinguished from other people. Why did you learn than when others going through college and university and so on don't?

CHRISTINE: We're not really taught how to think. In college, we're taught a bunch of information. And I did end up going to college for a couple of years, but I didn't graduate. I dropped out of high school, negotiated my way into college, took a couple of years, and then dropped out to start building businesses. It was too slow. I wanted the real-life experience. So what I found first is that they don't teach us how to think.

Rule number one is everything is an illusion, so you may as well pick one that's empowering. You know, don't just go, "Gosh, what is everybody else is doing, it must be right, I should do that too." Because it's not true. An MBA is great, but a *GSD* – a "Get Stuff Done" – is a lot more valuable. If your brand equals results, you will always have a job. You will always have the possibility to sponsor projects. And you will be able to get what you want in the world.

They don't teach us that sort of stuff in school. You learn that sort of stuff through the school of hard knocks, if you will. And I want people to learn that sooner, so they can create more of what they want in their life. Entrepreneurs are always coming to me, saying, "What company should I start?" And I always say, "Problems plus pain equals profit." Find a problem that's really painful and build a business to solve that painful problem. That's how I built the five businesses that I've built and sold. And those are the companies that usually get the best financing. There's a painful problem that somebody is removing.

Also, I know we're going to talk about networking later, but when we take a systematic approach to networking, it makes all the difference in the world. We don't just show up randomly to a cocktail party, we actually have a plan when we walk in the door. So you meet the right people and

build immediate rapport, which we'll also talk about. And then we can take that 5-minute conversation and leverage a lifetime relationship out of it. This is the sort of stuff you don't learn in school. This is the sort of stuff you learn from mentors and from life experiences and from modeling people who have been successful. Does that make sense?

TAHL: Absolutely. And we are going to hit those topics hard. Before we do, I want to ask you about making life transitions. You've made some very drastic ones. If you can go from monk to businesswoman, there's no transition that you can't make happen, right?

CHRISTINE: Yes.

TAHL: So, tell us what you learned in those years. Why you decided to leave and what you learned in the transition that you now apply to other transitions later in life.

CHRISTINE: OK, so what I learned leaving the order, no longer being a monk, is that what you mean?

TAHL: Yes, yes.

CHRISTINE: The main reason that I had to break my vows after seven years was that everybody...again, it was a structure, just like college, just like the world is, just like high school is. Just like business is. In the monastery, what we all want is to transcend ourselves. And I kept going, "Wait, we're going the wrong direction." You know, to evolve, aren't we supposed to go in and down into ourselves, not up and out? I don't want to transcend who I am, I want to *find out* who I am so I can then truly transcend and not just - you know, meditate a bunch, get really wise, but still be totally screwed up as a human being. So I ended up leaving because I felt that we weren't going in and down and dealing with who we were. All of our challenges are blind spots. I knew that for me to really be of service - because that's what matters to me, to make a huge difference on this planet before my time is up - I needed to face those challenges. I didn't find that was happening in the monastery. I felt that we were glossing over some of the hard stuff in personal growth. So that's why I had to leave. And what I've learned is that the world really is my monastery. I learn so much from human relationships. I get to equalize myself with others, right? That's the most important thing to know when we're trying to build a business or influence others. We tend to put people above us, and that's just not true, you know? So we can equalize our self with others, for starters, which is a core tenet of Buddhism. We're all the same. We all have one unit of self worth. No one's better than anybody else. So as we equalize, then we can exchange. And when we exchange ourself with others, and I do this all the time in business, we have a new tool. If someone is mean

or challenging, it's just because they're in pain. And so you think, "OK, when have I been in pain before." OK yes, I've been in devastating pain before. That's possibly what they're going through. And when we can *exchange* our pain for their pain, we can then talk to them far more effectively.

See, we put a lot of energy into resistance, human beings, I find. We resist, we resist, we resist – because we want something else. We resist the current situation that we're in. That doesn't help anything. If we can actually look at what we want to create and who we have to be to get that, which is chapter one of *Rules for Renegades*, then we can find them. I'm Christine Version 11 right now. I mean, 11 really profound versions of myself. And in *Rules for Renegades* you'll learn exactly how to reinvent yourself and that we should be doing this all the time, because the current *you* maybe can't have that next experience you're wanting. But the *you* that you're going to create can. Does that make sense?

TAHL: You mentioned in your book several moments in your life when you realized you needed to look the part. These were times that, even in your new iteration of yourself, you didn't fit into certain environments. You even felt a little bit inadequate amongst the company that you were keeping.

So how did you change that? Right now at this point in your life, it seems hard to imagine you ever lacking any confidence, whatsoever. So how did you accomplish creating an image of yourself that others received well and do it without coming off as inauthentic?

CHRISTINE: It's service-oriented Tahl. It really is. So just like in rapport, we step out of ourselves then we say, "What does that person need to see?" So Monday for instance, I'll be in New York City. I'll be in a room of 40 CEOs of mid-market companies. Forget me, OK? I'm not relevant. What's relevant is what can come *through* me. What do those guys need to see? What they need to see, based on talking to the folks who are sponsoring the event and just listening, is someone who's conservative, someone's who's got some really good answers to what is happening in the world right now and how they should manage change. Someone who's going to help them walk away with like five tips so they can manage the radical amount of change in their organization today. So yes, I don't like wearing conservative suits, but I will wear one. That will make them feel safe. Rapport tools help us step out of ourselves.

So I always look at "What does that person need to see and hear to receive my message?" Then yes, I chameleon into that for the purpose of my interaction with them so they can feel safety, belonging, and the feeling that they matter.

- TAHL: Could you explain how you “chameleon?”
- CHRISTINE: I use the terms that make them feel safe. I wear an outfit that makes them feel safe. I use rapport techniques that make them feel safe. All this so I can be of greater service. Because the rest of the time, I just want to wear jeans and a t-shirt, OK? To be totally authentic in Christine-ness, I would be wearing jeans and a t-shirt. But it’s not about me. It’s about serving *them* and I think we forget that. We think that to be authentic, we’ve got to always be saying, “Here I am, here I am.” But in the world of service, if you really seriously want to serve, my friends, it’s about asking what the person needs to see, hear, and feel in order to receive whatever your gift is.
- TAHL: Hm, OK.
- CHRISTINE: We’re being authentic to our *purpose*, not to our favorite fashion statement. That’s all transitory anyway. If your purpose really is be of service, then do it. Be of service. That means be who they need you to be so they can receive the gift that you want to give.
- TAHL: You’ve talked about your expertise in human behavior modification and how you apply these techniques to business. Is this one of those tools? On your website there’s a teaser that promises to use neuroscience to sell better.
- CHRISTINE: Do you want it? Do you want the technique?
- TAHL: Yes.
- CHRISTINE: OK, you guys. Let’s start with levels of rapport. Basically, once food and shelter is handled, people need to feel safety and belonging. So, as an executive in the world, your most important thing is to help people feel safety and belonging, because otherwise they can’t hear what you’re saying, and you can’t get anything done. So create rapport, that feeling of safety, I want to talk about are what are called *metaprograms*. Rodger Bailey created these, brilliant guy. Metaprograms really are the lenses through which people see the world. So we all have six primary lenses.
- The first metaprogram is *towards or away*. Each of these meta-programs is polarized. So if somebody is like, “Yes, I want to launch new initiatives, I want goals, I want forward motion,” that’s a *towards* person. An *away* person is all about risk mitigation: “Let’s be cautious, let’s not go crazy and jump in.”

The CEOs, the marketing people, the sales people, are often towards people. The CIOs, maybe, the accounting people, maybe HR, are away. So if you're trying to get a CFO on board of a certain initiative, you say, "Hey, you know what? Let's be real cautious, let's make sure we've got all the I's dotted and T's crossed." They're going to feel a sense of rapport with you. Now you're not this crazed sales or marketing or other type of towards person who wants to mow them down.

The next one is *options or procedures*. *Options* people are like, "Wow, here's all these possibilities. We could do this and that and that," and everybody's all excited. *Procedures* people, listening to that, are getting freaked out. Procedures people are thinking, "OK, I just need to know step one, step two, step three, because I don't want to mess it up. Don't give me all those choices." So if you're talking to an options person, you want to say "Oh yes, and we can do this and this – yes, Bob I love all those ideas. You know, let's figure out which one is best." You're talking to a procedure person, you say "OK, Sue, yes we're going to do this and then we're going to do step number two, step number three, and step number four. Are there any steps I might have missed?" You know, you want her to feel safe.

Next is *general or specific*. The easiest way to find out if somebody's *general* or *specific* is to ask them how their weekend was. If they say, "Oh, it was great, I had a really good time," that's probably a general person. If they say, "Oh, we went boating, and then we went camping, and then we washed the dog, and then we made snow angels," that's a specific person. The general people want the net-net.

At one of our client companies, the COO was talking to the CEO in very specific terms. The CEO, whose metaprogram is general, called me up and said, "I don't think this guy is going to work. He just rambles on and on and on." So I had to talk to that COO and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. What's the metaprogram of this CEO?"

Now the COO just goes in, communicates the bottom line in a toward/options/ general approach, and the CEO loves him. Couldn't *stand* him before.

OK next: *Reactive or proactive*. Just like it sounds. The *reactive* people watch and kind of wait and see, and then they'll make some choices. The *proactive* people are like torpedoes, they charge ahead. Sometimes the proactive people can dive in too quickly without doing their homework.

Next, *Internal or external*. The internal people gauge their success by how well they're doing internally. They have an internal barometer. So a person who is internal often will be IT. Technology guys are usually like,

“Look, I know how to do this. I did a good job, I got the code done, etc.” The external person wants lots of external validation. Salespeople often are external people. They don’t meet the quota, they don’t feel good about themselves. So if you have a lot of internal people in your sales department, they’re not going to necessarily think quotas are that important. So be careful with that.

The last metaprogram is *same or different*. *Same* people want to avoid change; *different* people are happy to change everything. And here’s what’s cool: 65 percent of the American workforce wants *same with exception*. Remember when New coke came out? It was a disaster. People were like “Coke was good, why’d you take my coke away? I don’t want New Coke.” Total marketing disaster. What *did* work for Coca-Cola? Cherry Coke. “Oh, it’s Coke. It’s the same, oh, but with an exception: we add some cherry.”

So to bring it to the workplace, when you have a change message, you don’t say, “Woohoo, we’re going to change everything.” You just lost 65 percent of the people. They’re freaked out by that. You say “You know what guys, we’re going to keep all the great stuff that we’re doing. We’re just going to remove all the stuff that’s really irritating.” *Same with exception*.

I’m going to give you one recent example. We had a CFO and a CEO who weren’t communicating all that effectively. This is similar to that COO example I gave you a second ago. The CFO was going into way too much detail and he was really, really, *really* procedural. He thought he was matching the metaprograms of the CEO, but here’s what he missed: Metaprograms are contextual. Ha!

So, the CEO, when he looks at business, he’s toward, he’s options, he’s general, he’s proactive, he’s internal and he’s same with exception. But that’s in the context of business. Now in the context of finance....The CEO is not strong financially. He feels frankly a little uncertain in that area. So his metaprograms in finance are away. He doesn’t really want to deal with it. He doesn’t want to make a mistake, away, procedures, general still, reactive, external and same with exception. So you’re probably catching how different his metaprograms are in business-building overall versus the world of finance.

Once the CFO realized this, I coached him to do two things. Thing number one, he speaks in the CEO’s metaprogram in the context of finance. “Hey, George, we really want to be cautious with our finances, so here’s the procedure I’m going to follow. This is the net-net. These are the two choices, here’s all the external sources that are validating this particular choice, right?” Because his CEO is external in the financial

realm. “And it’s the same thing we’ve done in the past, we’re just taking away the bad stuff, and we’re adding some new good stuff.”

One more component to this, we have to also look at the sensory system of the human being. Most of us fall into *visual*, *kinesthetic*, or *auditory*. The CEO in this case is very kinesthetic. He feels. He’s a very feeling person, and you can see when he starts to shut down. So he would get overwhelmed in the past when hearing from the CFO, and he would shut down. And he would sort of look down and just kind of spin and feel insecure and uncomfortable because he didn’t know what to do next.

Once we understood this, I said to the CFO, “Hey, you’ve got to stick a visual under his face to break that kinesthetic loop.” So now he sticks a visual under his face, and he says, “Hey George, here are the choices we have about what we’re going to do with our budget.” There’s like two columns, and it’s really short and sweet. And the CEO now doesn’t get stuck in that kinesthetic loop.

TAHL: Let me just try to recapitulate it. The metaprograms help you categorize different kinds of behavior, which once you internalize, it allows you to become more aware of how people operate and adjust your behavior accordingly. Is that the basic idea?

CHRISTINE: Yes. The basic idea is that you adjust your behavior to speak in a language that they understand and they are comfortable with. Forget your own language so that they can actually hear what you're saying.

TAHL: OK, great. So let’s talk networking. To get into that, talk about how you first got yourself into the White House.

CHRISTINE: The number one thing is networking *palm up*. What most people do is palm-down networking. “What can I get?” They go to a cocktail party, they’re trying to grab stuff. That’s palm down. Palm-up networking is finding out what somebody needs and helping them get it. You’re going to get yours later, the universe has a perfect accounting system. So if people simply change their networking approach to be palm up, you walk around at a cocktail party, you ask what business they’re in: “Wow, that’s cool, how did you get into that business?” Everybody has a great story as to how they’ve gotten into their business. “Wow, what’s your ideal client?” “Oh, I might know some of those guys. I’ll follow up with you next Tuesday.”

And now we did two things. We did palm-up networking and we showed that we want to build relationships. We know that we’re going to get later, we’re going to give first. And the second thing is that we started to forge in that person’s mind that we *follow through*. We make our brand

equal to results and we use palm-up networking. Those two things alone will endear you to so many people and really propel your career.

So me: I got into the white house by helping a group called Technet in Silicon Valley to sketch out some technology initiatives that we could explain to the U.S. government that would then enable the US government to get on board with the Internet. This is back in the day.

So then I was invited to the Department of Defense to give a speech on moving our information systems to intranet – you know, distributed computing – so we could serve the American public better, make government cost less and work better. I gave the speech, I flew back home, and by the time I arrived back in San Francisco, I already had a call from Al Gore’s office saying, “Can you get back on a plane and come back to DC and help us figure out the government’s technology strategy?”

So it all started by donating tons and tons of hours to Technet to help – palm up – to help make a difference. Which then got me to the DOD, which then got me to the White House.

TAHL: In *Never Eat Alone*, we have a special section devoted to Bill Clinton, whom I find fascinating and I think maybe the best networker of all time. I mean, the way he processes and manipulates social capital is unbelievable. He’s a scientist around it. Can you break down why you think he’s so good and what you observed in your own brief encounters with him that just blew you away? Can you talk about that?

CHRISTINE: For starters, when he’s talking to you, you’re the only person on the planet that exists.

TAHL: How did he do that?

CHRISTINE: He’s totally present. He’s looking at you, you can tell that he’s not thinking about what he needs to do later. He chooses to be totally present and to be totally focused. Hillary is like that too. Hillary Clinton has a crazy-amazing memory. But Bill, he’s totally focused when he’s with you.

He is very much palm up, you know, “What do you care about?” and “How can I be of service to you?” And then he follows through amazingly. I was talking with him when I first met him about how I see bad things coming if we don’t foster more entrepreneurship in America and turn it around. Within like a week, I had a letter from him saying, “OK, where’s the proposal? Let’s follow up on this entrepreneurship thing.”

Same thing happened with me with Dave Peacock, president of Anheuser Busch. I spoke with him after a speech that he gave, talked for a few minutes. He said, “You know what? I want to continue this conversation.” Within an hour, he had emailed me his private email address and his private phone number. I mean, you know this guy follows through.

So the high presence, the palm-up networking, and the rapid follow through made a huge difference for Clinton. And then of course, everyone thinks he’s really charismatic, and it’s because he’s really paying attention. And most people aren’t present. I know you know this, Tahl. I do this too. It’s true. I’ll be talking to somebody on the phone and I’ll be checking my email, shame on me. I’m not being totally present. People can feel when you’re not totally present.

TAHL: I’d go into that a little bit because it feels to many people like a touchy-feely notion. But it’s clearly not, it’s clearly profoundly important so, but also that it’s hard to teach and to talk to people about it within a professional context. So, can you talk about how it’s connected to focus, how it’s connected to charisma, and how you get someone who’s not at all present to bring more presence into their life.

CHRISTINE: OK, excellent question. Focus and presence to me are the foundation of leadership. When you choose to be exactly here, exactly now, there’s a couple of things that happen.

First of all, people feel that you’re aware, they feel that you care. Let’s also think about social media and why it’s so popular. It fulfills this deep need in people to be *seen*. I mean, seriously, let’s speak about this really honestly. When you grew up, did you really feel seen and acknowledged as a kid? Probably not. In your daily life, do you feel like people are really deeply, profoundly connecting with you every moment? Probably not, right? The more input we have coming in, the more phones and email, texting and etc., the less present we are. And when we can just stop and be totally present with somebody, we’re going to have a much shorter conversation. We’re going to be able to foster leadership, because we’re not going to be telling somebody what to do to get them out of our face. We’re going to be asking them, “What would you do, Bob? Will you own that area? What do you think had happened? What could go right, what could go wrong?” We’ll be inquiring instead of advocating.

We have this advocacy culture, where we’re telling people what to do just to get them off of our checklist and move to the next item. People aren’t items on a checklist. We’re not cultivating a culture of leaders, we’re cultivating a culture of order takers. We created that culture.

The more present we are, the more we can do inquiry. And yes, it's excruciating in the beginning, but after about three times that person is now going to go off and lead on their own and maybe they'll sometimes check in with us. But they'll be out of the order-taking business and we'll be out of the order-giving business. It comes down to stopping, breathing, and really focusing on exactly what you're doing at this exact time.

TAHL: It reminds me a little bit of, in some of my travels, encountering what you might call gurus, especially with the meditation. I've noted how it almost feels that they're not blinking when they're talking to you. They're so focused and it creates such an incredible kind of a power and relationship where you can completely absorb the moment and whatever this person has to say. So I completely relate to that.

CHRISTINE: Yes, people want to be seen. That's why social media is so potent. People want to be seen. They want know that they're not inconsequential and invisible.

TAHL: You've written that focus is channeled through clarity, and the importance of being direct in both your own vision and the way you communicate it. Can you talk about the three domains where clarity is practiced and how we can get better at that?

CHRISTINE: The whole point with clarity is *explicit* versus *implicit* communication. And here's where we get in trouble. A lot of us will be explicit to a degree in our communication. "OK Sue, please do this, this, this, and this." But then we will be *implicit* in all the things that we expect her to figure out as she does this particular task. Then later we're disappointed or she fails because we weren't explicit.

So please, everybody, consider how often your communication is explicit, very clearly telling them exactly what you want them to do. And how much of it is implied or implicit. They're not inside your head. So what I call *clarity of math* is really important. A clarity of math means we're going to go from *here* to *here*, and here is exactly how we're going to do it. We're going to go from A to B and here is what everything is in the middle. Or maybe A to D is a better analogy. We're going to go from A to D and here is what B is exactly and here is what C is exactly. We need that clarity of math.

We need the clarity of the communication, which I mentioned before. We've got to be really, really clear and being explicit in our communication. And lately I've also been looking at clarity around how we present ourself. There's clarity in like seven or eight domains, but if

we can be a reliable, consistent person and manage our emotional state, we will further build safety.

When we aren't clear, people often feel unsafe or emotionally disengaged. Why do 71 percent of people in the American workforce feel emotionally disengaged from their jobs? Seventy-one percent, that is so shocking, you know? It was the same number last year. So it's holding consistent. Why do all these people feel disengaged? Well, there's low clarity, there's low presence, and there's low accountability. Management often doesn't set up accountability structures. Why should I be accountable? Are there rewards if I'm accountable? Are there consequences if I'm not? I can't tell you how many cultures I go into that don't have accountability structures, rewards, consequences, presence of clarity. These are the building blocks to truly have leadership.

**TAHL:** I want to go back to something we were talking about in terms of networking. You've courted and gained credibility with many powerful people. You've got a blog cordially entitled "I Stalked Steve Jobs and How to Get a Meeting with Any VIP." You've got to tell us about that.

**CHRISTINE:** It's not that hard to get a meeting with any VIP. The quick recipe is to ask for five minutes of their time in exchange for you giving five hours to their favorite nonprofit.

So you've got to do some homework. When you first connect with them, send a letter. I prefer a letter that's typed and sent via FedEx. One of my clients, a huge high-level executive at Deloitte just used this approach. He finally got through to someone he's been trying to reach for three months.

You figure out what it is that you want: I want five minutes of advice from Joe Blow. So then you send a letter, one page or less. Don't ramble on. Just say, "Wow, I really admire the accomplishments that you've made, Joe Blow, in your life. I want to do that too. I would love to ask you for five minutes of advice."

Don't ask for anything else, ask for advice. It triggers their ego and their emotional state. "I would like five minutes of advice from you and in exchange I'll give five hours to your favorite nonprofit. I've noticed you've done great things with American Cancer Society," blah blah blah. Short and sweet.

The letter has to be heartfelt and genuine, OK? Really heartfelt. You have to genuinely care. Make this letter a work of art.

Send it via FedEx and then start calling their assistant. The FedExes and the phone calls to the assistant continue until you get the meeting. You call the assistant at the beginning of the day or the end of the day when they're more likely for you to take the call.

Great, so you get the meeting. Bring a timer to show that you're respectful. Set the timer for five minutes so that they'll really get that you've got prepared questions that you want to ask them. After five minutes, you're going to leave.

Timer goes off, you start to leave – they always keep you there longer. And generally what happens is that you've forged an alliance with someone because you really came to them for advice. They got to be big, you were small. They got to be big and up on the mountain in giving you advice, and now they're going to follow up to make sure that you took that advice.

TAHL: That's an ingenious method of what we call kind of "leading with generosity."

CHRISTINE: Yes, leading with generosity is like palm-up networking. Beautiful.

TAHL: I'm going to move to some of the questions that have been thrown out by the audience. You have a rolodex of over five thousand people. Are there any technologies or processes that you use to keep up with the people in your life? Is any kind of organizational system in the way you've kind of manage your relationships?

CHRISTINE: You have to have a top 200. You do, or it will make you crazy. Top 200 or top 50, right? Who are those people that I really need to stay in touch with? And those guys all get birthday cards. I need to get back into holiday cards. I kind of let holiday cards go for a while. But there's the top 200, and then there are the clients, and then there's the influencers as well.

So figure out who those top people are. Now, here's the thing. These are people that you want to have a long-term relationship with. These are people that you want to be of service to. These are people that can be of service to you because these are people that you really feel have a similar values and a similar mission. All the people in my top 200 want to make the world a better place. OK?

TAHL: OK, and...?

CHRISTINE: I don't have an amazing system. I wish I could tell you that I did. But with just those 200, whenever I go to New York, I always ask myself, "Who on

that list is in New York who I can meet with?" If I have time I'll meet with those people. Some people I only see every five years.

I just saw a guy yesterday who I hadn't seen for 20 years and it didn't matter. He totally remembered me and he's like, "Wow, how can I be of service to you?" I couldn't figure why he wanted to be of service to me, and he reminded me that I had done something amazing for him 20 years ago. I didn't even talk to the guy for 20 years, OK? People remember that stuff.

**TAHL:** Another question from a myGreenlight member: Can you talk a little bit about exit strategies for networking conversations? When and how to end your conversation "correctly?"

**CHRISTINE:** Exit strategies for conversations. So I would like to keep them quick. If you've read my book, I think on page 149, we talk about the "drive-by schmooze." The drive-by schmooze is a networking technique really good for cocktail parties and holiday parties. You basically just zoom in, follow your intuition to get quickly to what somebody wants. You tell them how you can be of service to them, you jot a few things down, and then you tell them, "Great, I'll get back to you by Tuesday at four with these follow-up items." Or "Gosh, I'll get back to you with some ideas by Wednesday at 5." Not everybody you're going to immediately have some help for, but if you ask the right questions, you will to have a follow up item of some kind. Maybe, "Wow, I'd really love to introduce you to Joe Blow, he would be great for your business. I'll introduce you by next Tuesday." So the exit, to me, is the follow-up.

**TAHL:** It's a promise of some sort of next action.

**CHRISTINE:** Yes. That way, you walk away, and the last thing they think is, "Wow, I wonder if he's going to follow through with that?" Which is why you have to, OK? Don't say you're going to do it if you're not - otherwise you're getting negative brand equity.

**TAHL:** In your book you referred to building a network as another type of family. Now, if you have a family as dysfunctional as mine, sometimes it means letting some go. How do you deal with that? Do you have an opinion on bad relationships and how to handle them, or disconnect?

**CHRISTINE:** This is tricky Tahl. Recently I've been combing through these 5,000 people and I've been taking out the takers. Because I no longer want 5,000 people in my rolodex. I've decided I really only want about maybe 2,000 people who are real givers. I don't want takers in my rolodex anymore. What's the point? They always call me up, they always want stuff, they're never willing to give. I seriously don't have time for that.

There are so many great givers in the world, why would I let that time go to takers?

So takers are now being removed. I've actually had to be really direct with a few people, when they've said, "Well, you know I need this, I need that, I need that." I said, "You know what? Gosh, I can't help you anymore right now. I'm very happy to have been so generous with you in the past, but I am helping other people right now."

That's one way to say it. Another one, which is a little more tricky, is, "Gosh, I'm really into forging mutually beneficial relationships. And I feel like I've given a lot. If you'd like to return that favor, here are the three things that I'd like. And then we can see where we can go from there."

It's OK, guys, to hold your value. It's OK to say, "Gosh, I only do relationships that are win-win." I had a conversation last night where I was asked to be on the board of a really high-end conference company. And I said, "Well, I only do win-win relationships, so I hear what you're going to get from me, and I'm sorry to be so direct, but I don't quite understand what I'm going to get."

They hummed and hawed and I said, "Well, gosh, I would like introductions to five CEOs that you think I could really make a difference for." And they said, "Well, we're not willing to do that. Maybe after you serve on the board for a year." And I was like, "Oh, got it, OK. This is going to be a palm-down gig, I'm out." I don't even start these relationships now.

TAHL: You know it's interesting. Our guests on the Social Capitalist are all people who have done very, very well, and attribute a lot of this success to other people – what they've learned from them, how they've conducted these relationships. And most of them have said that at some point later they learned – they actually came to a point where there was some hard line they created in their mind where they said, "I'm tired of the people who create negativity or negative energy," or aren't givers, or whatever their articulation was. "There's not enough time to deal with those people." So you've come to that as well.

CHRISTINE: Yes, and thank you for saying that, because guys, there's this illusion that we have to be so nice that we actually give our value away. You can be nice and professional and hold your value, because you *are* valuable, you know? People don't just get to take your time. Dole out your time to people who you think will make a difference.

And a lot more people will ask you for your time than you will be possibly be able to give. I burned out at 40. I was just giving, giving, giving,

giving. I gave so much that I was like flat-lined and sick for three years, you know? Learn from my mistake. Give where you really feel you're supposed to give. You don't have to give to everybody.

TAHL: So, let's dabble in the gender area a little bit. In growing "the family," there must be some differences with men and women and their approach and the challenges that they face. Can you talk a little about the specific issues for the women in the audience?

CHRISTINE: In the networking world, is that what you mean? Building your networking family?

TAHL: Yes, or maybe you'll say, "You know, there *is* no difference, I approach it exactly the same way."

CHRISTINE: There is a difference.

TAHL: People sometimes think, "I'm afraid my generosity is going to be interpreted this way or that way."

CHRISTINE: For starters, women, sorry, but it's reality, so let's just face it. Women have to build their credibility constantly. I mean, everybody does, but women have to work harder. The more you can align yourself with a powerful brand, the better. It helps. I wrote for *Business Week* for a long time. I'm a *Forbes* blogger now, and *Chief Executive* just asked me to start blogging for them. It really helps when you align your brand with the brand that already has the credibility that you want or reaches market that you want to address. We all have to be building credibility by association.

Women, this is going to sound obvious, but it blows my mind, I still see it: Dress appropriately. Plunging neckline, short skirts – *not appropriate in business*. Don't do it. Wear that when you're in the weekend.

You can only touch a man on the hand or the arm. Anything else, there's subliminal sexual undertones, don't do it. Women come and they say to me, "Oh this guy only wants to help me because he wants to sleep with me." And then I have to kind of it break down and ask, "OK, what did you do to make him get that message?"

So yes, if you're a woman or a man, network appropriately. Talk about their kids, talk about their family. Bond over what matters to them, don't bond over flirting. There's nowhere to go from there. It's a family, remember, and you know flirting with your family is not appropriate.

Also make it really clear what it is that you're looking for. "I want to land," whatever, "three new clients that are in financial services businesses. Do you know anybody who serves those businesses or do you know anybody who's in those businesses? And you, what do you need?" Then you guys have a shared goal and you can be helping each other.

TAHL: Brilliant, the clarity with which you answered that, because sometimes people soft peddle it, they don't want to get into it. That's very honest and good advice.

We are essentially out of time. You want to hit anything that we didn't touch upon yet?

CHRISTINE: Everyone is starting to think about what they want to achieve in the new year. I want everyone to do a little homework assignment, OK? Get some quiet time in the next week or so and sit down and write down the three things that would change everything for you in your business life. What are they? Those are your *needle movers*.

I don't like goals. You achieve them you feel great, you don't achieve you feel lousy. And sometimes our goals don't really change our life fundamentally.

So again, what are the three things that would change everything in business. Maybe there are two. Write those down. Then do the same for your personal life. Me, I want more personal retreats this year. I want at least seven personal retreats where I go out into nature or I go a silent yoga retreat or whatever. I need to have at least seven of those, that's what's going to move the needle for me next year. So list what those three things are, the personal ones, what's going to feed your soul and help you evolve and grow as a human being so you can then serve in the world more effectively. In your personal life, in your business life.

So figure out what those needle movers are, then go to [christinecomaford.com/resources](http://christinecomaford.com/resources), go to the section under Operational Efficiency, read about needle movers, lay them out, and then please, please, get an accountability partner. You'll learn more about that on our site as well, in the "Resources" section. You're going to tell your accountability partner every single week what you're up to, using the weekly reporting format right there on the site. That way you can cop to what you said you were going to do and you didn't. And why. And maybe you're doing too much stuff that doesn't move the needle. We need those accountability structures because that's how we can grow, and have a little buddy to be growing with us.

And when you look at the Resources page I want you to ask yourself, what are *you* doing? All those resources on our website are free because I believe in giving first. That's what this whole show's about, right? So, look at how are you giving first. How are you putting stuff out there so people can enjoy it, without extracting anything in exchange? Knowing that's it going to come back to you.

TAHL: I love the idea of the needle movers. The goal talk can get oppressive.

CHRISTINE: Yes, yes, yes. Thank you. With the needle movers, you have a target, which is what you want. You have a minimum so that, "Hey, if everything goes wrong, at least I still get the minimum." And then you have a "mindblower," which is, *whoo, party down!* So you're going to achieve one of them and that's what keeps your momentum going.

TAHL: Unfortunately we're out of time. Thank you so much. I want to express my gratitude for taking the time to teach and share the best from an extraordinary life and career you've created for yourself. I think that's fantastic. Everyone that's watching and listening to us, thank you all.

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