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presents

MARCH 2019

# NETWORKING AS<sup>TM</sup> POWER

by Megan Burke Roudebush

with

Alison Cuddy, Kate Bensen, Sara Freer, Kaili Kaminski, Sapna Parmar,  
Valerie Rivera, and Ana Prokic-Kostic



This Women's History Month edition of Networking As<sup>TM</sup> focuses on Networking As<sup>TM</sup> Power. That is, the power of what happens when people's networks make amazing things happen. We spoke to Alison Cuddy, Artistic Director of the Chicago Humanities Festival about the Festival's 2019 Power initiative and the wonderful things that happen when people come together to attend the Festival's compelling programming. We spoke to four fierce female rising stars who, along with Megan, comprise a peer mentoring group called a power circle that meets quarterly to determine ways to be helpful to each other. After learning that Alison is a member of The Chicago Network and because four out of the five members of The Power Circle were mentees in a women's mentorship program co-hosted by The Chicago Network, we spoke to Kate Bensen, President and CEO at The Chicago Network (TGN), to get her take on the power that results when people's networks make great things happen.

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# NETWORKING AS™ POWER

At keepwith we know the importance of having a powerful network and leveraging one's network to do great things. We also know the positive impact that someone's network can have on his or her professional and personal lives and just how amazing it is each time someone relies on his or her network to make something good or important happen for another person. March is Women's History Month and we thought there was no better time of year to speak about the connection between networking and power—that is making powerful things happen with and for the people in your network.



## Alison Cuddy

Marilyn Thoma Artistic Director, Chicago Humanities Festival



keepwith was introduced to Alison through our advisory board member Alex Quinn, who is also at the Festival, when Alex mentioned the Festival is focused on Power this year, as a theme. Alison is a seasoned journalist who previously served as a Host at WBEZ. keepwith was honored to flip the script and interview Alison to find out more about her approach to networking, her work at Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) bringing people together to engage in fascinating content and programming, and how she views the connection between networking and power.

### How do you define networking?

AC: To me, networking is intentional socializing...The power of networking comes from how you build connections, learn from, and have pivotal experiences with people with whom you would not otherwise have crossed paths. The festival in some ways is about a network of ideas focused on a theme. We bring a theme—this year, Power, for example, and we explore the theme across the humanities and social sciences, bringing artists and poets and politicians and scientists together. One of the premises of the Festival is to help people get a sense of the network of ideas, which has a huge impact on their personal and professional lives.



### The networking/power link

AC: When I hear the term Networking As Power, it evokes connecting to other people. Forging connections across the things that may make us look different to each other or things that divide us. The most powerful thing we can do is forge connections to other people, enabling us to understand one another. Time and distance and technology can disconnect us. We must do whatever we can do to overcome those or to use those to our advantage to feel connected.

### Personal approach to networking

AC: One rule I have is I try never to say no if someone reaches out. I almost always say yes. I think “it is coming to you, so take that opportunity.” I do a lot of socializing. I go into an event with the goal of making at least one meaningful connection...where you walk away and know something about a person. I balance the broad large events with carving out space for the one-on-ones...I like to have multiple encounters with people before letting them in and I spend one-on-one time with people I want to get to know better. I am part of The Chicago Network...I enjoy being part of organizations that are committed to networking. The more we can get out of our own little bubble, the better.



As we think about the connection between networking and power, here are three things to consider:

1. Powerful things happen when you introduce people in your network to one another for the right reasons.
2. The network of ideas is just as important as the people within your network.
3. Technology can be a powerful force for good or a powerful wedge when it comes to how we build and maintain our relationships.

CHF's Spring Festival runs from Apr. 25th thru May 4th. CHF's Fall Festival runs from Oct. 26th thru Nov. 10th.



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A few years ago, I participated in a high-impact and engaging women's mentorship program co-sponsored by The Chicago Network and The Executives' Club of Chicago. The pre-eminence of my mentors and their exceedingly high-caliber advice and support have stayed with me since my participation. Another added benefit was that by participating in the women's mentorship program, I had the good fortune of meeting four of the five women featured below: Sara Freer, Kaili Kaminski, Sapna Parmar, and Ana Prokic-Kostic. In an effort to keep the conversation going, we have created a power circle (and added rockstar Valerie Rivera). This peer mentorship group convenes quarterly for a call to determine ways we can be helpful to one another. keepwith could not write about Networking As Power, without featuring these women and this circle.



## Sara Freer

Chief Communications Officer, New England Research & Management, Inc.

SF: I love our Power Circle because a trusted circle of contemporaries is priceless. I have full confidence in these women and in their success, and it is unique to have a safe space to discuss professional and personal challenges with like-minded professionals across a variety of industries. Small groups that meet regularly like this have been crucial to my personal and career growth. Community and vulnerability equals power.



## Kaili Kaminski

Multi-hyphenate: Not-for-profit leader, real estate developer, professional image consultant

KK: Having a sounding board for business decisions coming from women who understand my personal life goals has been one of the best results of being part of a Power Circle. The Power Circle is comprised of peers, other professional women also putting their skills and knowledge on the table to share best practices and resources. My advice for other women is to join their own peer empowerment groups because the camaraderie and support have been invaluable instrumental to my success.



## Sapna Parmar

Founder & CEO, Hello Duetto

SP: Networking creates power -when you get a group of smart, driven individuals in a room together around a common purpose, amazing things can happen.



## Valerie Rivera

Wealth Management Advisor, TIAA

VR: Networking as power to me means building strong relationships and being vulnerable so that you develop a real, trustworthy and lasting relationship. I participate in The Power Circle to be empowered by a group of diverse, incredibly talented women in a setting where we provide support, advice and challenge one another in a healthy way.



## Ana Prokic-Kostic

Regional Director, Business and Financial Operations (Midwest Division), CBRE, Inc

APK: I am tremendously grateful to be able to support (and be supported by) a group of amazing, successful young women. There are no ulterior motives, simply women truly supporting each other professionally and personally.



Here are some takeaways from the power circle experience:

1. Consider forming a small, trusted peer mentorship circle and scheduling a quarterly call to determine ways you can be helpful to one another. The three rules that make this group successful are: 1. confidentiality, 2. prioritizing the calls on your calendar and showing up; and 3. responding to a fellow circle member within 48 hours.
2. Having a small group of brilliant peer mentors whom you can e-mail, call or text anytime is valuable and exemplifies Networking as Power.
3. Keep an eye out for the women featured on this page and what they are up to. No doubt that what they do will be great and that following their success will be worth your time.

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As mentioned earlier, because Alison Cuddy is a member of The Chicago Network and because the power circle resulted from a mentorship program co-led by The Chicago Network, keepwith knew we could not complete this article without speaking with Kate Benson, President and CEO at The Chicago Network, about the power of networking.



## Kate Benson

President and CEO at The Chicago Network



keepwith sat down with Kate Benson to discuss Networking As Power, her approach to networking, and TCN's exciting Equity Principles launched in conjunction with TCN's 40th Anniversary. As keepwith networked to find the right subjects for this piece, we found that Kate and The Chicago Network were the glue connecting Alison Cuddy and the members of the power circle who participated in TCN's mentorship program.

### How do you define networking?

KB: I'm of the Adam Grant school that networking is all about being helpful to others and connecting people who can be helpful to each other. I also view curiosity about the world and people as an innate quality of the best networkers. It is never about keeping track of whether someone helps you in turn and it can be professional or personal. A recent example of the personal is connecting a rockstar woman who has a son who is autistic and is interested in equine therapy for her son with a woman who is an equestrian and a mom who could potentially help her locate those resources.

### Networking/power link

KB: I think about networking as a means for being a force for good. Networking is as natural as breathing and I love to do it. My brain is a filing cabinet and pieces of information pop out at the right time. This brings me great joy in the service of others. Not power in a direct sense, but powerful when it works well.

### Networking as central to TCN's work

keepwith asked Kate about how TCN brings together women across industries and sectors and how TCN members network with one another. Here is what she had to say:

KB: It's lonely at the top. Sadly that was true when we were founded in 1979 and it is still true. Networking allows our women (and frankly, all women) to find that critical sounding board and safe haven. What makes TCN unique is that we draw across a broad spectrum of professions and you find that two people who do very different things can face the same issues and be resources for each other.



TCN is launching an exciting initiative-TCN's Equity Principles, in conjunction with the organization's 40th anniversary and TCN's Campaign for Advancing Women Leaders in the Workplace. A cornerstone of the campaign, the Equity Principles effort aims to get companies and nonprofits to sign the Equity Principles pledge in support of having gender equity at various levels of responsibility (in each organization) by 2030.

According to Kate, "the Principles are all about leveling the playing field so that women can advance to leadership positions at area companies and nonprofits. This is the only initiative of this type that is being driven by senior women, and we believe the Chicago business and civic communities are poised to lead the country in this regard."

Formal launch of this initiative will take place in early May. For more information, go to [www.thechicagonetwork.org](http://www.thechicagonetwork.org)



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As women's history month comes to a close, keepwith wanted to explore the power behind the people that we know and the power we unlock when we help and support others for the greater good. Whether introducing a friend in job search mode to just the right contact, or reaching out to a new friend for guidance when a once-in-a-lifetime professional opportunity falls into your lap, or simply connecting two wonderful friends because your networking gut just tells you the world will be better if they know each other, networking is power and each woman featured in this piece is living proof.



## About

### Networking As™

Networking As™ is a recurring series of articles, blog posts and videos highlighting how networking is integral to a particular topic (for example, Networking As™ Wellness). Networking As™ publications may be accompanied by real-life networking events. Future issues will include Networking As™ Mentorship, Networking As™ Business Development, Networking As™ Parenting, Networking As™ Meatballs and Networking As™ Global Assignment, among others.

Have an idea for a future Networking As™ publication? E-mail [megan@keepwith.com](mailto:megan@keepwith.com)

## Why

### Power

At keepwith, we see the interplay between networking and power every day. The impact from what happens when people activate their networks to connect and help one another is a powerful thing. We know that empowering people to network well leads to strong relationships that make things happen. Now more than ever, it was important to talk about Networking As Power during Women's History Month. We hope this is only the start of the conversation.

## About

### keepwith®

We are a company that teaches people how to network well. We provide tailored advice and education that empowers people to form relationships that matter. Said more simply: we teach networking.

Founder Megan Burke Roudebush values authentic relationship building above all else. From New York City and now based outside Chicago, she enjoys volunteering, mentoring and most of all, networking well.



Megan Burke  
Roudebush

## Please

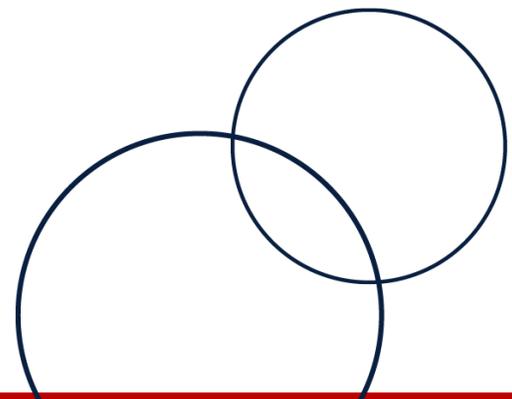
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Know an organization or team who would benefit from networking education and advice?

Please contact Megan Roudebush ([megan@keepwith.com](mailto:megan@keepwith.com)) to schedule a brainstorming call to figure out how we can help.



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