



Episode 43 - Start Networking Now to Open Doors

With guest Dr. Laura McKain

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HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hello, hello and welcome back to the Doctor’s Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You're listening to episode number 43. Today, we're talking about networking. How to be successful at it, and even have some fun in the process.

When I bring up the topic of networking with my clients, I feel like a parent addressing chores with their teens. There's a distinct lack of an enthusiastic response. Networking has the word work in it after all, and it can conjure images of awkward social settings of having to memorize an elevator pitch and needing to ask for help from total strangers.

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Yikes.

Yet almost on a weekly basis, I hear from my clients who do start networking and have a lot of success. I see the doors that open to them because they put themselves out there. It didn't take, but a little bit of advice, some encouragement, and just getting started for them to get their wins.

Today I have a very special guest, who is going to help us explore how you can get started networking and have your own wins. Her name is Dr. Laura McKain. She's a board-certified OB-GYN who worked clinically for 12 years before transitioning into pharma more than 13 years ago.

Some of you may know Laura as the founder of the great Physician Nonclinical Career Hunters Facebook Group. This is my very favorite Facebook group for nonclinical careers. Dr. McKain has helped countless physicians in her Facebook group, as well as though she has mentored and coached, find fulfillment in their careers. A significant part of her help has been through sharing or networking wisdom and advice. It is with much gratitude and appreciation that I welcome my dear friend and colleague Dr. Laura McCain to the podcast. Hi Laura, how are you?

LM: Oh my gosh, Heather, I'm so excited to finally be here with you. I know we've talked about doing this forever and I'm glad we're getting down to it.

HF: Yes, me too, me too. And I love this outline that you've created of the things that you're going to share. You're so organized, Laura. I really admire that in you.

LM: Oh, you're sweet. I've never met a bullet or an outline I didn't like. That's the truth.

HF: Well, it works for me. So, I am ready to dive in and I think you have a networking story to start us off with that it helped you in your own transition.

LM: Absolutely. I made a new year's resolution to get out of clinical practice and to transition over to the pharma industry. And I went it alone really, truly solo, really not telling or talking to anybody about it at all. And for many months I got absolutely nowhere. Just absolutely nowhere, except maybe like polishing my resume. But I wasn't getting any nibbles, any real bites at all.

I started to think, "Well, maybe I need to do some networking to try to get leads". And in fact, I finally reached out to a nurse that used to be in my practice. She worked for me actually. And she had transitioned over into pharma and settled in. And she'd only been gone a short while. And so, I called her up and I said, "Karen, how's everything going?" And it was truly for networking. And next thing I know, she set me up to meet with her boss for lunch and we had lunch and talked and I told her what my hopes and desires were. And they ended up creating a job for me. They didn't even have an opening. They actually created a job for me and I got hired. And it was because I was brave enough to start doing some networking.

HF: Oh my gosh, this is such a great story because it shows the contrast of when you're trying to do it on your own. And then you get the idea, "Well, this isn't working. Let me ask for some help". And you did. It Opened Sesame. It got you that job.

LM: I was hoping to get some connections or some leads, some advice and I ended up getting a job.

HF: And when you did this 13 years ago or so, back before there were all these Facebook groups and people were really active on LinkedIn. Especially at the time when you had to do more of those in-person face-to-face networking connections.



LM: Yeah. Like I said, I was very much doing it on the down-low, truly like groping my way in the dark, away from the bedside to a nonclinical career.

HF: Now, networking has changed so much from that time. Do you want to just talk a little bit about how you see networking in 2021?

LM: Oh, my goodness. I think networking is so much easier now because of the many of the platforms that are available to us. Actually, before we dive into that, I really want to just make sure everyone understands what I mean when I'm saying networking. When I'm talking about networking, I'm talking about making and building relationships that hopefully ultimately are going to be long-term relationships, as well as a good reputation over time with people that you can potentially help and who can potentially help you.

So, really kind of get that in your mind that that's what networking is about. And it is so much easier to do now because we have so many different social media platforms available to us. It is much easier to find people and connect with people to make cold calls, if you need to. It's also I think much more accessible to do networking now than maybe a decade or more ago when I was doing. And I think you're hard-pressed to find somebody who doesn't know what an informational interview was. Whereas when I was job hunting, I didn't even know what that was.

HF: Exactly. I love that you gave this definition of networking as relationship building. Because we all know how to have relationships. And we all have them. We have success at them and it sounds like less of a barrier than having to do networking.

LM: I think everyone should think of it that way. You shouldn't simply be reaching out, because you hope to see what they can do for you, nor should you only necessarily reach out to people that you hope could do something for you. You really should be trying to meet. And like I said, build relationships with people that you may be able to do something for. And in turn, they may be able to do something for you down the line.



Because you just never know where that opportunity that you're looking for is going to come from and who it is that when that opportunity comes open will have you top of mind because you've been networking and relationship building with them.

HF: I've had clients tell me about how they found an opportunity from a patient. They were leaving and they were chatting and then they opened up the door. It could be a neighbor, someone on the airplane. But LinkedIn, it's a phenomenal resource. You mentioned Facebook groups too, other social media platforms. You don't have to be an extrovert and good at chit-chat to be a great networker, which is one of the really nice shifts that's happened in how we're networking and whether we call it networking 3.0 or whatever it is these days. It's different. Do you want to talk a little bit about how you see networking being helpful for physicians who are transitioning?

LM: I think that there are a number of ways that it can be helpful. It can be helpful to connect with people who may be doing what you want to do to really find out what the job is about, what it's like, how that person got in that position, what they were doing beforehand, how their story may be similar or different from your story. It can be really a completely invaluable part of the learning process when you're thinking about transitioning. When you're asking yourself, "Well, what do I want to be?"

Meeting and networking and talking to people who are doing things that may or may not interest you is an ideal thing to do. It also is tremendously helpful. I've already mentioned how that can potentially help with finding a job. The reason for that, actually there are statistics around that, 57% of jobs are filled through a network contact or an employee referral.

Networking is one of the top ways that companies actually find candidates to fill positions. So, when a job comes open, many companies will take referrals. In fact, people may get compensated if their referral results in a hire. And if you polled this or Jane Jones said you're interested in moving into this type of career, et cetera. They're



going to think when they're going to reach out and say, "Hey, I want to let you know this position is open".

HF: Yeah. You mentioned it's great to speak with a physician who's in the kind of job that you're interested in so you can really understand what the day-to-day is like and try it on in your mind, if that is something that you truly want to pursue. You also mentioned it's a great way to find out about opportunities that may or may not be advertised.

LM: Absolutely. Or before they're advertised.

HF: You mentioned that statistic of 57% and when you Google it, you'll see 60%. So, you're absolutely spot on or even it's sometimes higher than that. And one of the reasons is that they find that people who are already working in that company tend to know other good people, and it's a much more successful way to hire and can take a lot less time than putting up an ad at indeed.

LM: Absolutely. And there's also statistics to show that if you are hired through a referral, you are more likely to be retained because you may already know that you kind of fit in with the culture, because you have this prior connection with somebody who already works there, having kind of somebody already on board makes a new employee feel more comfortable and it may help them assimilate quicker. So, there's a lot in it for a company to hire a referral over somebody that just applied through some portal on the internet.

HF: Let's take an example of a physician who may be shy. They're introverted. They don't really like to put themselves out there on social media and they're thinking, "Okay, Dr. McKain, how do I get started? How do we even know where to begin with this at all?" What would you suggest?

LM: Okay. I guess the first hurdle I would ask that person to get over is to insure that they do at least have some kind of an online presence. I think it's at the bare minimum and it's



probably enough actually that you really should have a good LinkedIn profile that you've already established yourself on LinkedIn. I really think that that's absolutely critical because hardly anybody gets hired without the hiring manager or the HR department checking you out on LinkedIn. So, I think it's absolutely critical that you have that presence.

But also keeping in mind that that can be one great tool. Like it can be a tool if you do not feel tremendously comfortable with it. And when I say that, I mean, they may not feel comfortable kind of reaching out to somebody that they don't know at all, but what they can do is they can reach out to people. They can connect through LinkedIn with people that they already know and then see who their network is, to see some common person can help make an introduction, which can make a person who's maybe not that outgoing feel more comfortable.

In other words, it's going to help you to scan your existing network, to see if there's anyone there who might be able to help you, or you help them or find out what they're doing. But also, it is an opportunity to find out about your network and to go one stage up. To see like maybe my immediate tribe doesn't have somebody that knows or has, or can advise on what I need, but somebody they know might. And maybe that person as an interim can make a connection for you.

So, I think that is absolutely critical, especially for people that are introverted. So, consider who can help make those introductions because that can definitely make them much more comfortable.

HF: You know me, I love LinkedIn and I think LinkedIn is a great playground for introverts for a lot of reasons.

LM: You're not going to be able to just lurk via text or what have you. At some point, you're going to need to have a conversation, but even that, if you structure it right, and you set



a very clear agenda for it, that even an introvert can feel more comfortable executing on that.

HF: And here's the thing about introverts is that they like having deep conversations. They're good listeners, they ask good questions and that's really what an informational interview is. And to get to that point on LinkedIn, you could potentially reach out to someone, they could agree to speak with you, and then you have a phone call.

So, you're not in an awkward social setting where you're having to schmooze and hold a cocktail in one hand and hors d'oeuvres in the other and try not to spill them, which I know I've done. I start talking and before I know it, I've spilled something.

I want to talk a little bit about the alumni connection because I think it's a very powerful one. And it's also great for warming up your connections in a way that you don't have to know people. And I have a little story about it.

I have a former client and she didn't even have a LinkedIn profile when we started working together. But then she got one done and she said I'm ready. She already had an idea of the job that she was interested in. So, I taught her my alumni networking hack. And it's really simple. It's about searching on LinkedIn under where you went to school, it could be college. It could be where you did med school, your residency for the people who are alumni. Because that connection feels like family. And we're much more willing to do something for someone just because we went to school with them. It doesn't have to be the same decade.

So, she used the alumni hack and she found someone who had gone to her college, who was working at the company she was interested in. She messages him and within minutes he messages her back and said, "Can you send me your CV? I want to give it to the hiring manager". He gives it to the hiring manager, the next day she gets a call for an

interview. And before you know it, she has a job in this company. The only job she applied for.

LM: I love it!

HF: Yes! That's how it can happen. So, if you haven't been networking, if you're introverted, if that feels uncomfortable to you, I have so many stories I could tell you about, that happened just like this.

LM: And I can share one too. Just two days ago, somebody reached out to me for an informational interview. I was the advice-giver in this situation. And I found out that we're both Hoyas. We both graduated from Georgetown and it was an immediate connection. And I spent more time with her on the phone than I would have I'm sure if she had not been an alumni.

HF: It's absolutely true. So that's a great place for you guys to start. You can get your LinkedIn profile and then you can start searching for people who went to any of your programs. I have to put a plug-in for my LinkedIn course, which is not quite done yet, but it's going to be at a store near you pretty soon. It'll actually be available on the website. It walks you through with videos, building your profile and how to network. And even has examples of messages of how to send those initial messages out to people you want to talk to.

LM: I love it. That is going to be an enormously valuable resource for folks.

HF: Thank you. Thank you, Laura. I'll let you guys know when it's out. Now, let's talk a little bit Laura about some "dont's". What are some things you definitely don't want to do when you're networking?

LM: Again, don't make it just a one-way street. Don't only reach out to people that you think can help you, go beyond that. So, I think that's very important. I would also tell you that when you are reaching out to somebody, don't make it hard for them to help you. When I say that I mean, and I'll be very specific here. When you reach out to somebody through LinkedIn or have you, and you say, "Hey, I would love to have a conversation with you about X, Y, Z", make it super easy for them to say yes. Don't make it hard to get that nailed down. So, say give them three days in time that might work, so that they can say "Yes, Tuesday at 04:30 would be perfect". Make it super easy. Don't ask for an hour. Don't ask for an hour.

HF: 15 to 20 minutes.

LM: Like, literally. And promise them I'm going to stick to 15 or 20 minutes. I'm going to do it. Don't forget before the end, when you do connect and you're having this conversation, don't use all of your time without asking one really important question. And that is, "Do you have any advice for me?" Very open-ended. I'm not going to write you an email with that advice, but in this phone conversation I'll give you a couple of bullets so to speak of advice. So don't ever end a conversation without that as an ask at least. And then if you are going to make a very specific ask of the person, if they hedge on it at all, like, "Hey, would you pass my CV along to the VP of this department?" And they kind of hedge on it, don't push them. Keep nurturing that relationship. Maybe at some point later, they'll be comfortable. So, those are a couple of them. Did that hit the mark?

HF: Those are excellent talks. They're all great. You said, make it a two-way street. It doesn't have to be all about your asking. And sometimes with a specific person, we may not be able to return the favor, but we can certainly pay it forward or to somebody else. Or even just ask them "Is there something I can do for you?" Even if you can't.

And then you said number two, make it easy. Limit the time, 15 to 20 minutes, because often people will give you a lot more. But if you create this expectation in their mind,

that's going to be quick they're more likely to say yes. And then don't leave without the question of opening the door "Do you have any advice for me?" I think that's really great because they might not give it unless you solicit it. And you also said, don't push if you ask them about transferring your CV to somebody if you get some hesitation, like leave that up to them.

LM: Absolutely. And you know what? I left out another one. Don't forget to follow up with a quick note of thanks. Please write a quick "Thank you" note. Tell them what you've learned. Give them some tidbit and follow up, tell them you're going to take their advice and follow up with them later. Say, "Hey, that book you told me to read, I read it. And it was fabulous". Or what have you. So, don't forget to say thank you. And don't forget at a later date, don't become a pest, but at a later date, follow up, telling them that you acted on any advice that they told you.

Hf: Absolutely. Absolutely. Those are golden, Laura. I have a few tips for how to think about the message that you're sending. And I use this rule of the three C's for it. So, the first C is "Start with a compliment". Everybody likes to hear something nice about them. So, find something in their profile to compliment them on. It could be, "Oh, I'm really impressed by your transition or how you wrote your 'about' section", whatever it is.

The next C is "Connect". Find something that connects you to that person. As we were talking about, it could be an alumni connection. It could be geography. It could be that you are in the same specialty. It might be that you have the same special interest on LinkedIn or volunteer. You may be both on medical mission work. Find something that connects you to them. And then the third one is "Clarify". Clarify what it is that you want from that person. Be very specific about it, but also very focused.

LM: Those are terrific. I absolutely love that. And especially if you keep that in mind, if you're introvert, make sure to have a couple of notes in front of you and make sure you tick those boxes. I think that that is really going to be helpful for you to try to get the most

out of it. You talk about making sure that you want to give them a compliment. Well, I think in doing that, I love that as a first step, it's really important that you do your homework before you meet that person. And don't just say, "Hey, tell me about yourself". You should have already scoured the internet to try to learn as much about them that's out there as possible before you meet them. So that you're ready with a compliment when you get them on the phone. I love that.

HF: Yes, yes, yes. That makes such a difference.

LM: It does, absolutely. It gets the conversation rolling.

HF: And that's the beauty of the internet, because you could potentially read an article that they wrote. Maybe they published a book, maybe they've been on a podcast. And if they feel and understand that you have done this homework and spent some time learning about them, they would be so much more willing to bend over backwards for you than if they get the sense like, "Oh, you didn't even read my LinkedIn profile".

LM: Right. Exactly, exactly. Yeah, I love that.

HF: All right. We're getting close to time here and there's so much more I love for us to be able to talk about, but is there anything you think we've left out or a story that you'd like to share, Laura?

LM: Well, I will tell you that I do think when you are actively looking for a career transition, that it is important, but I do believe that networking is important. And I think it's important that it would be a very active process and that somebody who is actively looking for a job that networking it's not just scouring for job openings. But networking needs to be on your to-do list as something that you are actively doing on a very regular basis.

I even recommend that people may want to set some goals, some very achievable goals around networking. Like I'm going to send X number of emails or make X number of phone calls each week, or I'm going to spend X amount of time interacting on social networks or on social media to try to make new connections, or I'm going to make X number of informational interviews. I'm going to get one of them under my belt this month and two under my belt next month. Like setting some really definite goals I think can be really helpful for getting that thing to pay off for you.

HF: I'm so glad you brought this up because it is something that we can sort of kick the can down the road where, "Oh, maybe I'll do that tomorrow". I know there's a lot of resistance to sending out sometimes that first email or a method, I've seen it happen. I've done it myself. So, if you give yourself a target date to just do it, then send it out and don't worry about it.

I have a little reframe that might help people who have some hesitancy, which is to go for the "No's". Don't set your goal of getting someone to respond. You say, "I'm going to get five "No's" or I'm going to get five people to not respond. That's my goal". Because you can meet that expectation. And then you're like, "Okay, check, got that. Check, got that". And then when someone does respond, it's icing on the cake. But what it means if you're going for the "No's" or the "No" responders, it's that you're actually putting yourself out there.

LM: Exactly. It's like, you got to kiss a thousand frogs. You gotta kiss a thousand frogs. And you might as well just get through a thousand of them because it's going to pay off eventually.

HF: Yeah. Yeah. And it works. You and I both know because we've seen lots of people have success at it. That if you put enough energy out there, it will come back to you.

LM: Yeah, absolutely. I agree.



HF: Well, there's something I think you have to share with us. It's a new offering that you're going to be having that I'm really excited about. Do you want to tell us a little bit about it?

LM: I will. I'm going to share some early news with your listeners. This is a project that I've been thinking about for a long time and I'm actively beginning to plan for it. But I wanted to let you know that I'm going to be establishing a pharma industry special interest group. And specifically, it will be for physicians who have an interest in pursuing a career in pharma biotech.

It's not going to be a course. Instead, I'm really trying to form an active learning community for physicians to advance their knowledge of the pharma industry. And also, to give them some interesting opportunities that actually build the leverageable skills and experience to augment their clinical expertise so they'll become a more attractive industry candidate.

My group is going to be recruiting founding members. And the first focus is going to actually be on drug safety. And Heather, thanks so much for letting me tell your listeners about it.

HF: Of course!

LM: And I'm going to provide a link to you in the show notes so that people can connect with me and get more information as it becomes available. The target for this is going to be late fall of 2021.

HF: Perfect. This is a rare opportunity guys because Laura knows pharma inside and out. She has mentored and helped so many physicians so she understands your struggles. And this would be a great way to get more individual help and have a supportive group. So, I



will definitely link to this opportunity in the show notes. And if you're interested, please check it out. I highly, highly recommend Laura.

LM: Thank you so much, Heather.

HF: All right. This has been so much fun. I love this topic. I am an introvert so I can relate to a lot of you out there. And I don't like social media, but I love LinkedIn and I can help you with it if you want. So please avail yourself of all the opportunities to get what you need and want. And don't forget guys to carpe that diem and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

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Podcast details

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