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- o Decide that you are going to focus on building your inner circle and come up with criteria.
  - o If we do not make it an intention it is likely to never happen/result in a situation where it might be too late.
  - o We MUST make things priorities in our minds first and commit to them. We all have so much going on, and this is one of the “softer/longer term things” to put on the list.
  - o Answer these questions:
    - Why is this important to you?
    - What role are you hoping it will serve?
    - Who should be part of this inner circle? Why them? (Prioritize - you cannot do it all at once.)
  - o Criteria: : you have to get clear on what role you want these people to play. This is not in a manipulative way, but it goes back to the intentionality. And we would argue that it should be a mix:
    - People you admire that you want to learn from and emulate
    - People that are peers and you can all “support each other on the way up”
    - People that may be below you in the pecking order and can use YOUR support while you benefit from the relationship as well
  - o Side note: : sometimes you might need people in your circle that you haven’t historically ‘jived’ with. Now, we don’t recommend bringing people in that fundamentally you cannot get aligned with. But think about this objectively to assess all sides. Goes back to picking the ‘right’ people. (Sometimes contrarian opinions are good!)
- o Create a plan that breaks down how you will build your circle.
  - o You have your list of people! Now what? You need a plan. It is not possible to schedule a dozen meetings in a week to get this kicked off. Plus, there are likely people at different ‘phases’ of being part of your inner circle. We mentioned prioritizing in the previous point. Now it is time to map out what is realistic with everything else you have going on, and what makes the most sense by person.
  - o Plan must be tactical in nature and not be overwhelming. If it feels like too much, we won’t do it. Give a set number of tasks/meet ups per week and hold yourself accountable. If you go out of the gate too overzealous, (said young me always), re-evaluate. Do this at the end of every week and keep yourself honest. Then, adjust accordingly.
- o Decide how you will continue to cultivate the inner circle you have built.
  - o You cannot enlist people just to love them and leave them. You have to continue to maintain the relationships you have built while still bringing people into the circle. This speaks to the point about relationships being at different phases. I always think about it as “rings of your inner circle”. You cannot sacrifice your closest people while you go and bring other people in.
  - o Once your plan has been in place for a while, you will reach a level of maturation where you are in maintenance mode vs. curation mode. (Not to say that you will not still be bringing people in, but you will be doing less of that.) This goes back to what makes the most sense and what do you have time for.
  - o At a fundamental level, you are maintaining relationships. When you think of it this way it is easy to see why you have to continue to tend to your circle. And really, this shouldn’t look like work anymore when it is a practice. It becomes somewhat second nature and part of who you are and what you inherently do. And yes, I realize this is ME saying this, the person that gets all of her energy from others. This is why it is important to find what works for you. The bigger point is if you are doing it right, it should stop feeling like “work” at some point.
- o Look for ways to proactively support your inner circle.
  - o This is a big one and deserves its own point because it is one that people often miss. And it can be easy to see why - when you are on a journey to build your inner circle through the lens of what YOU need, it can be hard to think about what THEY need from you! (This is why we have the lower on the totem pole group in the breakdown in the previous point - this can be an easy way to put this into practice.)
  - o Back to the relationship point. We have all had people in our lives that take, take, take and never give back. This is NOT what you want, and this will NOT allow you to build your inner circle in a meaningful way. It is okay when you first start out to be primarily focused on yourself and what you need. But you do need to think through how you repay those that help you.
  - o This this can be hard for those of us asking a lot of the people that have a lot more seniority than us. We get into the “I could never possibly do for them what they have done for me!” That is not the point. The way to look at it is there is ALWAYS something you can do. Give the big boss public kudos in front of their boss. Take something off their plate that you can easily do for them. Pay it forward by offering up yourself to someone more junior than you that they are connected to. There are tons of ways to do this if you think about it through the right lens.

