No longer does an executive need to work for the same company year after year. Nor does a CEO need to spend months looking for the perfect executive candidate. There is a dramatic shift from needing to own an executive’s expertise for a number of years to simply leasing expertise on an as-needed basis. How I Fired My Boss and Made More Money provides an insider view of how top-level executives are enjoying long and accomplished careers as interim executives and independent consultants.

“The gig economy is most often thought about as Uber drivers, Grubhub delivery people, Task Rabbit helpers, and so on. However, the increase in non-permanent work arrangements also now extends to C-level executives, who may not be accustomed to the freelance life. McAlister’s and Wasley’s book breaks new ground by helping senior managers understand the relevant context and providing the how-tos for setting up a business and succeeding as an independent executive.”

Andrew Karpie, research director for Spend Matters Network

“The world is moving, make no mistake about it, in the direction of modularized everything—including employment. The employer of the future hires in more and more variable ways; and the employee of the future has many bosses. At the heart of this is the concept of the interim executive and independent consultant. If that sounds like you, then McAlister and Wasley have written the guidebook to your future. This is How You Do It in the employment world of the future.”

Charles H. Green, CEO Trusted Advisor Associates, co-author The Trusted Advisor

“In your hands you hold a blueprint for your future. The next ten years is the decade for independents to shine and succeed. Kristen and Pamela share what you need to know and what you need to do in order to position yourself for more prospects and clients. The bonus revealed is how you can have more flexibility and freedom to create the life you want.”

Mark LeBlanc, author of Never Be the Same and Growing Your Business!

**Kristen McAlister** joined Pamela Wasley to purchase the executive talent firm Cerius and serves as president. She is a national speaker and is published on topics ranging from operations and productivity to talent management and the contingent workforce.

**Pamela Wasley** is one of the founders and CEO of Cerius. She has served on several private boards, and is a frequent national speaker and is published on topics of mergers and acquisitions, the workforce of the future, and global contingent workforces.

**$20**
CHAPTER 4

Always Be Doing Business Development

Nurturing Your Business Sources

Too often, we see executives take on an engagement that is four to five days per week for a period of time and neglect their business development efforts during that time. Their efforts don’t pick up again until their engagement is close to the end, at which time their previous efforts have lost their momentum. Out of sight, out of mind. If you only keep in touch with your contacts when you are looking for your next engagement, their ability to keep you top-of-mind decreases.

Business development is one of the most time-consuming, yet extremely important parts of being independent. At one time or another, every executive will be challenged with keeping a consistent portfolio of clients. Some of the more common sources for business are networking and referrals. We’ll go into each in a bit more detail in this chapter.

Networking

Even though referrals are the number one source of business for independent executives, we are starting with networking since it often leads to the referrals. Networking
doesn’t necessarily mean going to event after event. The initial goal is getting in front of people and making new connections. Every person you meet is a connection and you never know where it might lead. Below are some of our basic tips for networking.

- **Choose Wisely.** Choose events that either have a topic you are interested in, someone invited you who can introduce you around, or are likely to attract client decision-makers. The third is fairly obvious, but can often be the least productive events without at least one of the first two criteria.

- **Ask Questions.** If you haven’t read it in a while, pull out Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. No one likes going to an event and being sold to, especially CEOs. Some don’t even like going to an event and meeting people. They go for the speaker, the topic, or because they were invited. Help to put them at ease in a conversation. Ask questions and get to know them. Whether they are potential referral sources or potential clients, you should end up knowing far more about them than they know about you. It is very off-putting when we go to an event where someone knows nothing more than what our company does, and we are handed a business card with the comment, “If you ever need my services, please call me,” and that is the extent of the conversation. You’d be surprised how often this

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happens. Many of our clients don’t network because they know most people they meet with either see them as a sales target or just tell them what they want to hear. That’s not valuable to them. If you do meet potential clients, ask questions. Keep the conversation focused on them. If they can use your help, the conversation will turn into a discussion. Make a gentle offer, like, “I’m happy to provide some additional insights and expertise. Let me know.” The more aggressive you are, the more it will turn them off.

- **Good Connections.** A good rule of thumb a friend once gave Kristen is, “If you connect with one person and schedule a follow-up meeting, it was worth going. If you connect with three people and schedule follow-up meetings, leave the event, because it doesn’t get any better than that.” That’s the Rule of Three. However, beware of walking out with a handful of business cards and expecting results from just this one activity and a quick conversation. Do the follow-up. Initially, you will be more focused on quantity and meeting with as many people as you can. Once you get to know who the best referral source for you is (and vice-versa), you can be more particular about the types of people with whom you speak and follow up. Make sure they have the best chance of referring the right type of business to you or you are able to refer business to them. It’s a two way street.