

## Educating the “C” People: Who, What, Where, Why and How

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You find yourself in the elevator with your firm's managing partner with nothing prepared to say. You put a new initiative for your department in the budget, but it doesn't come to fruition. You feel disconnected from things going on in the organization that directly effect your department. If any (or all) of these statements sound familiar, don't worry – you're not alone. Marketing your services or communicating your value to management isn't always easy. But becoming better at marketing isn't the answer. The real solution is to become better at creating opportunities by cultivating relationships with the leaders – also known as the “C” people (e.g., CEO, CFO, CTO) – within your organization. The “C” people make the key decisions. You need to get in front of them and close to them to get what you want – to leverage the assets of the organization to achieve your department's goals. But before you can even begin to get to know the “C” people, you must know and understand yourself. Self-knowledge is essential to creating lasting and effective relationships with others. Understanding your own style makes you more aware of the styles of others; this awareness allows you to work more effectively with them.

### Who Are the “C” People?

How do you get to know the “C” people within your organization? The first step is to find out who the “C” people are. Chances are you already know who many of them are, but if you don't know, make it a priority to do so. Consult resources such as phone lists, organizational charts, internal documents or information (perhaps by searching on your organization's intranet), annual reports, or just start asking around. Think about what departments within your organization might include “C” people. Once you have a roster of the “C” people in your organization, you still need to keep up with the changes in staff or leadership roles. If you are involved in orientation for new hires within your organization, use that opportunity to start cultivating relationships with new “C” people. For “C” people who are physically in other locations, keep up with new hires in other offices to see if there are people with whom you should get acquainted. One of the biggest barriers to developing relationships with the “C” people these days is physical location. Many law firms are becoming global and hiring the best talent wherever it exists, so the “C” people may be in other offices.

The next thing to consider is what relationships the “C” people have with others. This is the “Six Degrees of Separation” concept in action. Your relationship with one key decision maker may lead you to get your latest idea or initiative pushed through because of a connection that the key decision maker has with someone else. Also, when identifying the “C” people, don't just focus on those in leadership roles in your organization. Cultivating relationships with staff members who work closely with or directly support leaders in the organization can often be just as beneficial to you. Although they may not be the ones who ultimately will get you what you want, they can certainly help you get your foot in the door or get you that opportunity to take a seat at the bargaining table.



