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The Connection Economy

Community Over Competition

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The Connection Economy

First Edition

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Introduction

The Isolation Epidemic

We are more connected than ever—and more alone than ever.

We have thousands of social media followers and no one to call when we need help. We have instant access to anyone anywhere in the world and no one who will show up with a casserole when we're sick.

The modern economy optimized for efficiency, and in doing so, optimized out the very things that make life worth living: relationships, community, mutual aid, neighborliness.

Our grandparents lived differently. They knew their neighbors. They traded eggs for tomatoes. They borrowed tools and returned them with a pie. They showed up for each other—not because of obligation, but because that's how life worked.

We call these people the Old Homesteaders. And we believe their way of life isn't obsolete. It's essential.

The New Homesteaders

The New Homesteaders are people who are choosing—intentionally—to rebuild the connection economy that modernity destroyed.

They're not all farmers, though some are. They're makers, craftspeople, producers, growers, builders, and creators. They value real things over virtual things. They believe in community over competition. They understand that a handshake matters more than a contract.

New Homesteaders share certain values:

- Authenticity over appearance
- Quality over quantity
- Relationship over transaction
- Sustainability over extraction
- Community over isolation
- Generosity over scarcity

What This Book Is About

This book is a manifesto for the connection economy—an economy based on relationships rather than transactions, trust rather than contracts, abundance rather than scarcity.

It's also a practical guide to participating in this economy: how to find your people, how to build real relationships, how to create value through connection rather than competition.

Chapter 1

The Failure of Competition

For decades, we've been told that competition is the engine of progress. Compete for jobs. Compete for market share. Compete for attention. Life is a zero-sum game, and someone has to lose for you to win.

This belief has created an epidemic of isolation, anxiety, and burnout.

The Competition Trap

When you view others as competitors, you can't also view them as potential collaborators, friends, or community members. Every interaction becomes transactional—what can I get from this person?—rather than relational—how can we help each other?

Small businesses compete with each other instead of collaborating. Neighbors barely acknowledge each other. Communities fragment into isolated individuals, each fighting for their own survival.

The Scarcity Mindset

Competition assumes scarcity. There's only so much to go around, so I'd better get mine before you get yours.

But in the connection economy, abundance is the reality. When a farmer shares seeds, those seeds multiply. When a craftsperson teaches their skill, the skill spreads without diminishing. When a community solves problems together, everyone benefits.

Scarcity thinking is a trap that keeps us isolated and afraid. Abundance thinking is the key that unlocks community.

A Different Way

The New Homesteaders reject competition as the organizing principle of economic life. Not because competition is always wrong, but because it's not the only option—and often not the best one.

Community over competition doesn't mean there's no place for excellence or achievement. It means we compete against standards, not people. We strive to be excellent at what we do, not to crush the person next to us.

Chapter 2

The Economics of Connection

The connection economy operates on different principles than the transaction economy we're used to.

Relationship Capital

In the connection economy, relationships are capital. Not metaphorical capital—actual capital. The relationships you build create tangible value:

- The neighbor who plows your driveway
- The friend who refers customers to your business
- The community member who shares their expertise when you're stuck
- The network that spreads word of your work

This capital can't be bought. It can only be built through genuine relationship.

Generosity as Strategy

Counter to transaction-economy logic, generosity in the connection economy is strategic. Give first. Help before you're asked. Share what you know.

This works because of reciprocity—not immediate, transactional reciprocity ("I'll help you if you help me"), but generalized reciprocity ("I'll help you because that's who we are, and when I need help, someone will be there").

Trust as Currency

In the connection economy, trust is the currency that makes everything work. Trust is earned slowly and lost quickly. Once established, it enables transactions that would be impossible otherwise.

This is why reputation matters so much. This is why New Homesteaders are fastidious about keeping their word, delivering quality, and treating people right.

The Long Game

The connection economy rewards long-term thinking. Every interaction is an investment in the relationship, which is an investment in your community, which is an investment in your own future.

Short-term thinking—extract maximum value from every transaction—destroys the relationships that make the connection economy work.

Chapter 3

Finding Your People

The connection economy only works if you can find other people playing the same game. Here's how.

Look for Values Alignment

Your people aren't identified by demographics or geography—they're identified by values. Look for people who:

- Keep their commitments
- Give before they take
- Value quality and authenticity
- Think long-term
- Support rather than compete

Start Local

The best connections are face-to-face. Farmers markets, craft fairs, community events, local guilds and associations—these are where you find New Homesteaders in your area.

Look for the person who takes obvious pride in their work. The vendor who remembers your name. The maker who asks about your life, not just your order.

Online Communities

For those in areas without local New Homesteader communities, online connections can fill the gap—but they're a supplement, not a replacement, for real-world relationship.

The best online communities are tight-knit, values-driven, and facilitate real-world connection. Beware communities that are too large, too transactional, or too anonymous.

The Connector's Role

One of the most valuable roles in the connection economy is the connector—the person who introduces people who should know each other.

If you know a farmer who needs a market and a restaurant owner who needs local produce, introduce them. If you know two craftspeople whose skills complement each other, bring them together.

Connecting people is a form of generosity that builds your relationship capital while strengthening the entire community.

Chapter 4

Building Real Relationships

Finding your people is just the beginning. Building genuine relationships takes intention and time.

Show Up

The most important thing you can do is show up. Consistently. Not just when you need something.

Show up at community events. Show up for other people's celebrations. Show up when someone is struggling. Presence is the foundation of relationship.

Give First

The first rule of the connection economy: give before you ask. Help before you need help. Be generous with your time, knowledge, and resources.

This isn't altruism—it's relationship building. People remember who helped them when they didn't have to.

Keep Your Word

Trust is built one kept promise at a time. Say what you'll do, then do what you said. Be realistic about what you can commit to. Under-promise and over-deliver.

In the connection economy, your word is your bond. Protect it fiercely.

Be Real

Authenticity is essential. Don't pretend to be something you're not. Acknowledge your limitations. Admit when you don't know. Ask for help when you need it.

The connection economy runs on trust, and trust requires authenticity. Fake doesn't last.

Play the Long Game

Some relationships take years to develop. That's fine. The connection economy rewards patience.

Don't try to extract value from every interaction. Let relationships develop naturally. The payoff comes over time, often in unexpected ways.

Chapter 5

Creating Value Through Connection

In the connection economy, value creation looks different than in the transaction economy.

Collaborative Abundance

When New Homesteaders collaborate, they create more value together than they could separately. This isn't just about efficiency—it's about synergy.

A farmer, a chef, and a craftsperson collaborating create something none could create alone: a complete experience that's greater than the sum of its parts.

Cross-Pollination

Ideas and skills spread through connection. The technique one maker shares becomes the innovation another maker builds upon. Knowledge compounds across the community.

This is why open sharing, not hoarding, is the strategy in the connection economy. What you give away comes back multiplied.

Collective Resilience

A connected community is a resilient community. When crisis hits—economic, natural, or personal—the community responds. No one struggles alone.

This collective resilience is a form of insurance that money can't buy. It's one of the most valuable outputs of the connection economy.

Reputation and Referral

In the connection economy, word-of-mouth is the primary marketing channel. Do excellent work for one person, and their network hears about it. Reputation spreads through relationship.

This is why quality and integrity matter so much. Every interaction is an advertisement. Every relationship is a potential referral network.

The Invitation

The connection economy exists. It's happening now, in communities across the country, among people who've chosen a different way.

You're invited.

Come as you are. Bring what you have to offer. Be willing to give as much as you receive.

This isn't easy. It requires vulnerability, patience, and genuine commitment to other people. It requires letting go of the competitive mindset that modern life has trained into us.

But the payoff is immense: real community, genuine relationships, mutual support, and a sense of belonging that the transaction economy can never provide.

The door is open. Welcome home.

About IntroConnected

IntroConnected is the connection hub for New Homesteaders—the place where makers, farmers, producers, and builders find each other and build community.

We don't compete. We connect. We don't extract. We create.

Community over competition. That's the way forward.

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