

PETFOOD FORUM

Where the GLOBAL PET FOOD
INDUSTRY does business

Using the Power of Connection to Lead and Succeed

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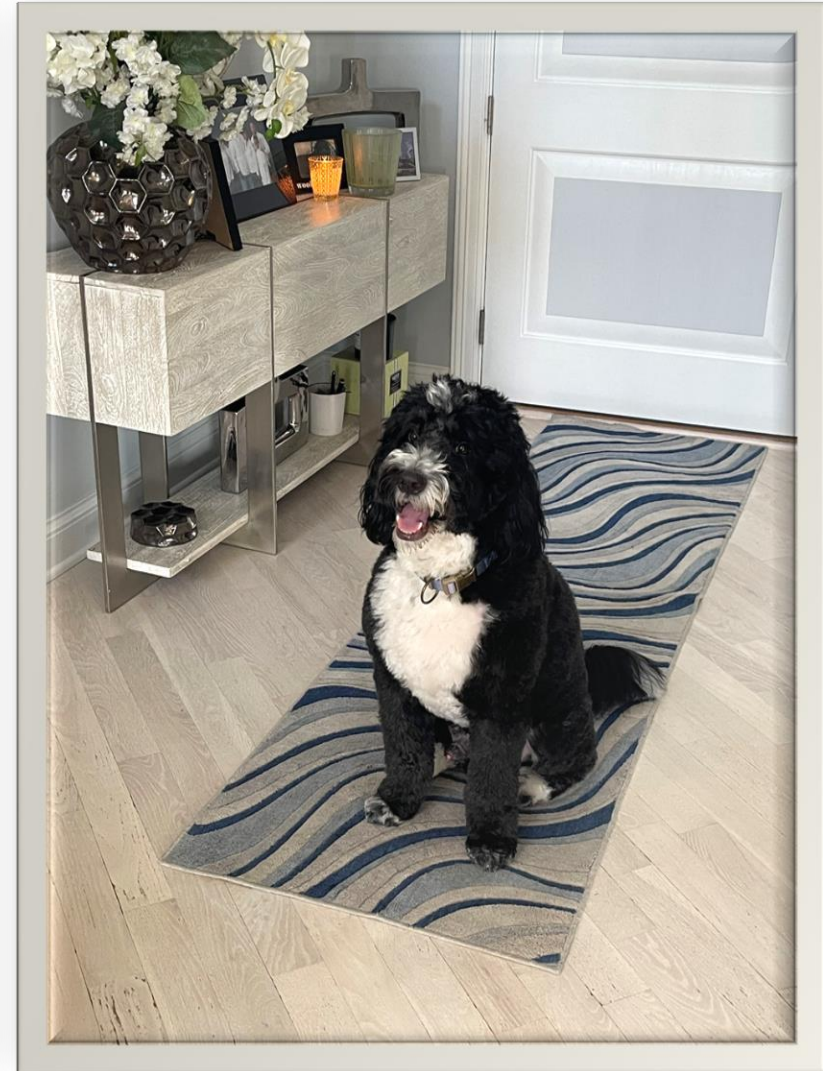
#petfoodforum

April 28-30, 2025, Kansas City, Missouri, USA



First... Introducing My Fur Babies

Oreo and
Boomer Jones



**Let me Introduce
Myself...**

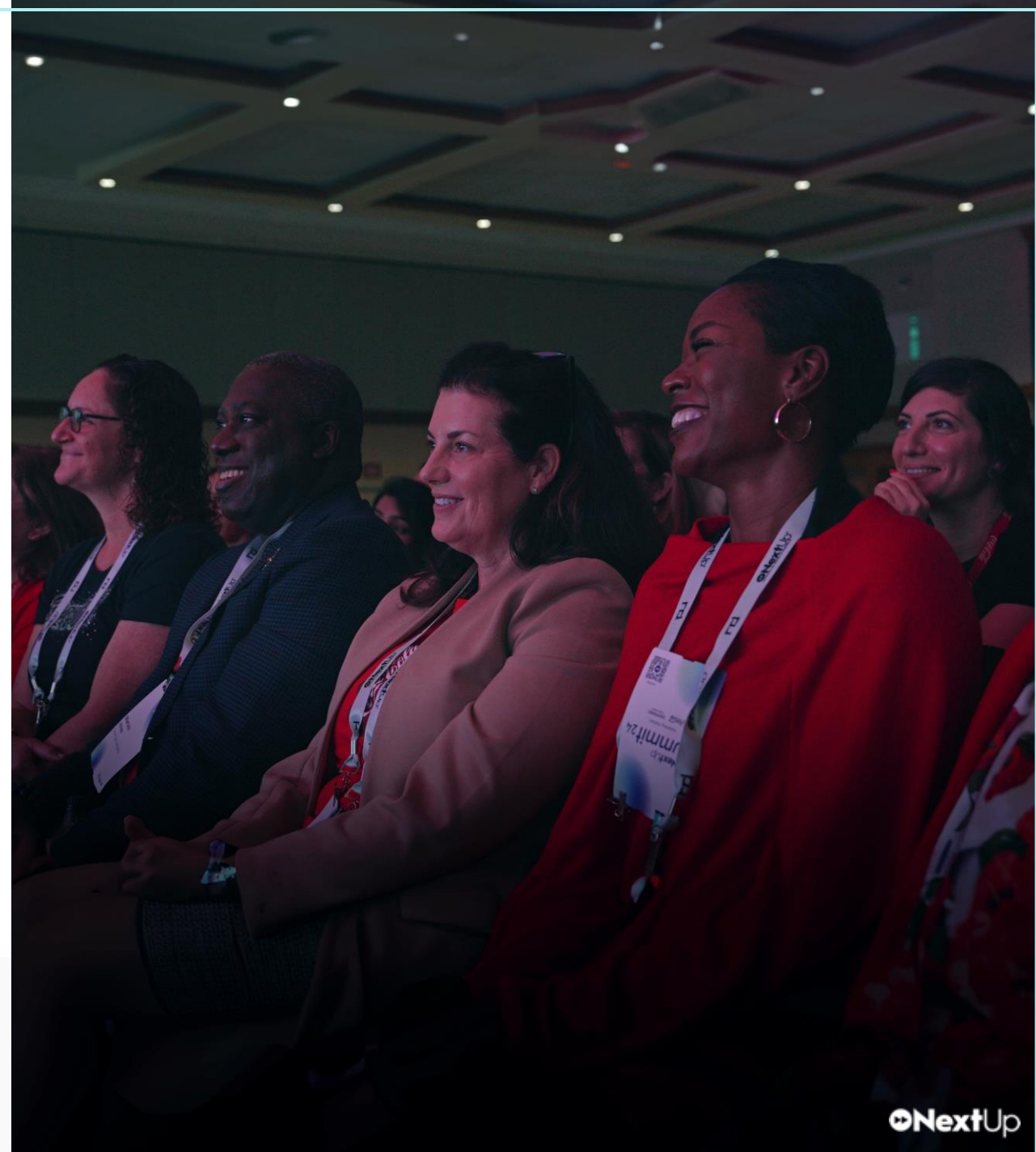


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Who we are

Founded in 2001, NextUp is the **leading** national membership organization that provides our community learning and hands-on leadership experiences to build the next generation of leaders and an inclusive workplace culture that **advances all women in business.**

View our [annual mission report](#) to see the hard numbers on how we've grown our impact.





About Workplace Connectivity

What's More Important?

Who You Know

What You Know

The Power of Connection

What the Research Shows

For High-Earners

A 2020 survey revealed that 72% of high-earning professionals believe that **knowing the right people is the most effective strategy for career progression**. In comparison, 53% emphasized the importance of **excelling in their current roles**. (Source: The Ladders)

Research led by Harvard economist Raj Chetty indicates that individuals from low-income backgrounds who **form friendships with peers from higher socioeconomic statuses** tend to achieve greater economic success. (Source: Forbes)



In this session we will...

- Discuss what is happening to connectivity in today's workplace
- Understand the power of connectivity
- Learn ways to build stronger workplace connections
- Commit to action

A black and white photograph of a woman in a classroom or meeting room, seen from behind, raising her right hand. She has long dark hair in a ponytail and is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved top. In the background, a large projection screen displays a circular diagram. Other people are seated in the foreground and background, mostly out of focus. The overall atmosphere is professional and educational.

What Happened to Workplace connection?

Impacts of COVID-19 on Human Connections



Rise In Virtual Connection

Traditional, in-person connections were abruptly halted and replaced by an immediate surge in virtual meetings, conferences, and online communities. Accessibility increased as people from across the globe started connecting



Remote Work Became the Norm

As physical offices closed, organizations became increasingly dependent upon digital collaboration for many. As casual in-office interaction dissipated, maintaining effective workplace relationships required more intentionality



Greater Emphasis on Authenticity

Connections deepened as remote work brought us into each other's homes. Online support groups and mentoring circles emerged as people sought connection via digital mediums

Human Connection in the Workplace

What's Currently Different?

1. Decline in Employee Engagement

According to Gallup, employee engagement has reached a decade-low, with only 31% of U.S. employees reporting that they are engaged in their work in 2024. This decline suggests a growing sense of disconnection among employees.

2. Mixed Feelings about Hybrid Work

While offering flexibility, hybrid work has led to challenges in maintaining spontaneous, in-person connections. Notably, some hybrid workers now view office attendance as a welcome change from working from home. [The Irish Sun](#)

3. Evolving Workplace Dynamics

- **Office Space Constraints:** Many face challenges due to downsized spaces during the pandemic, leading to overcrowding and inadequate facilities.
- **Generational Communication Shifts:** Younger employees, particularly from Gen Z, show a preference for digital communication over face-to-face interactions, impacting traditional workplace small talk and spontaneous conversations. [New York Post+1The Scottish Sun+1](#)



Understanding the Power of Workplace Connectivity

Benefits of Connection and Community

What's in it for you?



Career Growth and Opportunity

- **Increased Visibility** – Strong relationships help employees gain visibility with leadership, increasing opportunities for promotions and career advancement.
- **Mentorship & Sponsorship** – Building relationships with senior colleagues can provide guidance, career advice, and advocacy for future roles.



Knowledge Sharing & Skill Development

- **Learning from Others** – Engaging with colleagues allows employees to gain insights, industry knowledge, and best practices.
- **Collaboration & Innovation** – Teamwork fosters creativity and problem-solving, leading to better ideas and business success.



Emotional Support & Well-being

- **Stronger Workplace Culture** – A supportive network creates a positive work environment, reducing stress and improving morale.
- **Sense of Belonging** – Feeling connected to coworkers increases job satisfaction and engagement.




Increased Influence and Leadership Skills

- **Stronger Communication Skills** – Regular interactions help employees refine their ability to communicate effectively.
- **Building Trust & Influence** – Strong relationships help employees establish credibility and leadership presence.



Greater Job Stability & Security

- **Networking for Future Roles** – Internal and external professional networks can open doors to new opportunities, even in times of organizational change.
- **Support During Transitions** – Workplace connections provide guidance and reassurance during mergers, restructures, or career shifts.



How to Build Effective Workplace Connections

Building Workplace Connections

What to do



**Optimize Hybrid
Work Arrangements**



**Use Social Media
Effectively**



**Embrace Mentorship
and Sponsorship**



**Join Interest Groups
and Organizations**



**Use Internal
Communication
Tools Effectively**



**Attend Workshops
and Training**

Committing to Action

Actions You Can Take Now

Become a member of 

Become/get mentorship or sponsorship

Get professional development

Reach out to someone in your professional network at least once a week



**Connections are
currency!**



Thank You

