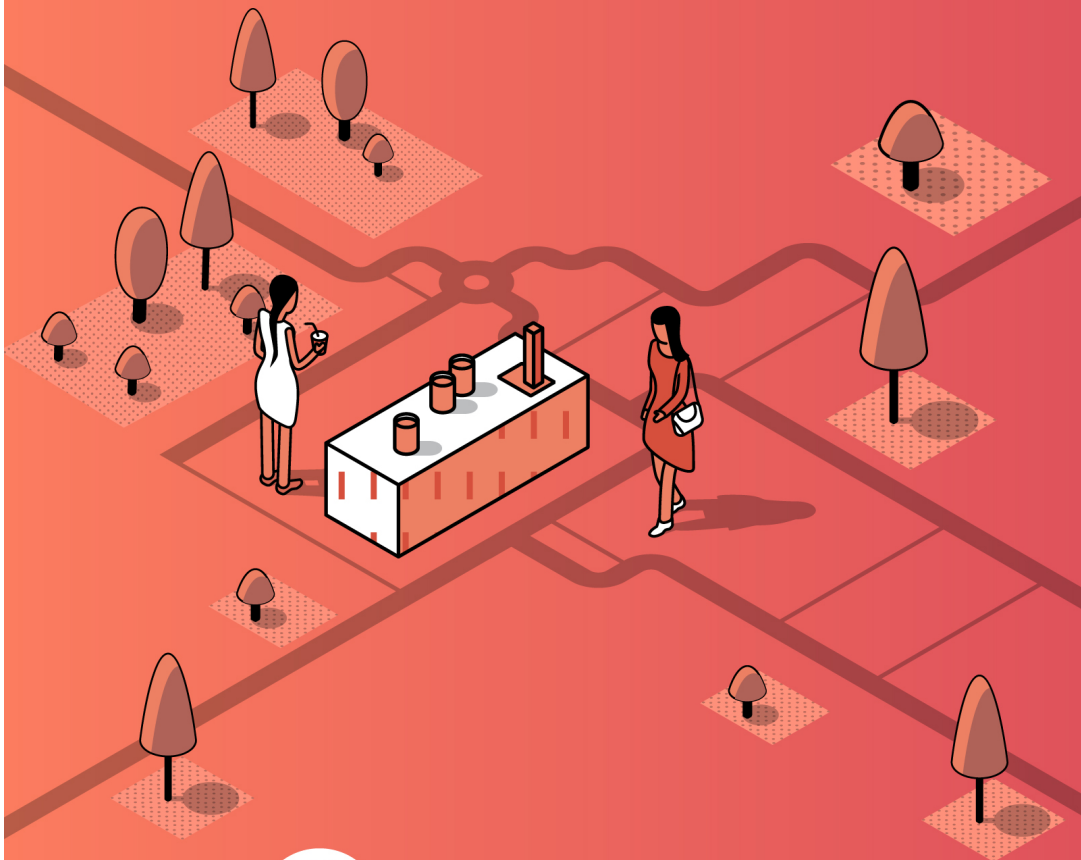


SUMMARY

MASTERMIND

DINNERS

JAYSON GAINARD



Summary of “Mastermind Dinners” by Jayson Gaignard

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Learn how a dinner party can help you craft your dream professional network.

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Introduction

Have you ever played one of those games that use “get to know you” questions as conversation starters? If you have, you may have gotten a question that asked something like, “If you could have a dinner party with any people, living or dead, who would they be and why?” At the time, you might not have given a lot of thought to that question; after all, it’s just a silly icebreaker to ask at a party. But what if the answer to that question could accelerate your career? What if you really could design your dream dinner party and invite all the people you most want to network with? Who would you invite? Would you choose potential investors or outstanding people in your field? Would you choose your professional role models or influencers who could promote your brand? These questions might sound far-fetched, like a nice fantasy about something that can’t really come true. But the author posits that this dream dinner party is actually more achievable than you think! And over the course of this summary, we’re going to take a look at his strategies for making this dream come true.



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Build Valuable Connections

Have you ever seen one of those punny wall-hangings with a slogan like, “I thought I wanted a job, but it turns out that all I wanted was a paycheck?” If that saying describes you, you’re not alone; many people dive into a job they don’t enjoy or take on work that doesn’t suit them because they expect to be satisfied by the enormity of their paycheck. Similarly, it’s easy to fall into the trap of assuming that fame, notoriety, or a substantial following on Instagram will bring you happiness. But as far too many people discover, these things are highly unlikely to bring lasting happiness. Instead, they most often result in a stressful and unfulfilling cycle of chasing money and fame.

That’s because neither your paycheck nor your 12,000 Instagram followers will bring you a genuine or meaningful connection with another person. And that’s exactly what this book is all about: helping you build genuine connections with others. So, if the paths we’ve previously discussed aren’t cutting it, what can we do to cultivate authenticity in our personal and professional lives? You might be surprised to discover that, according to the author, it all starts with a dinner party! This might be the last thing on your list of activities to engage in, because the truth of our hectic modern lives is that most of us are too exhausted to connect with our friends at all. When the workday ends, most of us are so mentally and emotionally drained that all we can do is pass out on the sofa with Netflix. It’s easier to hit “like” on a Facebook post or upload a cute picture to Instagram than it is to hold a real conversation or genuinely connect with our friends.

So, if hosting a dinner party sounds as impossible as taking a quick trip to the moon, you’re not alone. But as wacky as it sounds, it’s also the most vital thing you can do for your career and your mental and emotional health. Let’s take a look at why it’s important.



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Don't be a Poser

You can spot fake a mile away. Whether you realize it or not, you're the proud owner of a finely-tuned "fake-dar" that can detect insincerity in a heartbeat. You know when someone doesn't really like you. You know when someone isn't being real. And the same is true for pretty much everybody else. That means that if you're not being genuine in the way you present yourself or in the way you interact with others, people will be able to tell. Not only will they resent you for it, it goes without saying that they won't want anything to do with you. So, that's why our very first step is simply, "Be authentic!" (Or, if you want to make it simpler and a little more catchy, just don't be a poser).

But what if you're genuinely not sure what real authenticity looks like? Sadly, many of us are at a loss when it comes to that age-old encouragement to, "Just be yourself!" Many people don't mean to be fake or disingenuous, but if you're not sure who "yourself" really is, freely living into that self sounds impossible. The author acknowledges the sad reality of this fact and offers some practical tips for transcending our everyday existential anxiety. A great place to start, for example, is by identifying your core values. What values define your worldview? (For example, kindness, honesty, integrity?) What do you want in life? What kind of qualities do you look for in a friend? And perhaps most importantly of all, what value can you add to the lives of others?

This last question is crucial for your networking efforts because it will define your approach towards making connections with others. For example, are you reaching out to others in the hopes of gaining more followers on Instagram? Do you want a flock of yes-men who will tell you how great you are? Or are you looking to form genuine connections that are based on a foundation of mutual trust and respect? Are you interested in growing your business, perhaps, and finding others who can help you grow? Are you passionate about a cause? Perhaps you're seeking people who share your vision for making the world a better place.

Whatever your goal is, it's vital for that goal to be guided by a 'mutual value added' mentality. So, what does that mean? Quite simply, this mentality can best be defined as one which seeks to cultivate relationships that are mutually beneficial to both parties. We've all been in relationships with people who take more than they give and we all know that's no fun. But if your relationship is driven by a 'mutual value added' mentality, both parties will start off by asking, "How can I make someone else's life better? How will another person benefit from knowing me?" This attitude eliminates selfishness and encourages collaboration, so it's precisely the attitude you want for any partnership! Whether it's a friendship, relationship, or professional connection, both parties should always strive to cultivate a mutually beneficial dynamic.

So, if you attend a networking event, hoping to meet new people in your field and make new connections, don't start by thinking, "What can that person do for me?" Instead, start by asking, "What can I do for them? What value do I bring to the table?" Combining this approach with total transparency will help you facilitate authentic connections with others. Being 100% honest about yourself, your interests, your views, and your goals may be scary at times because one thing is guaranteed: you're going to alienate someone. You can be the ripest, juiciest peach in the world and there will still be somebody who doesn't like peaches. But as scary as it may be to accept that, the truth is that you don't need everyone to like you. The people who really are interested in supporting you will be drawn to you and your honesty will help you forge powerful and lasting relationships.



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The Way to a Man's Heart is Through His Stomach

That quote was penned by nineteenth century feminist author Fanny Fern, who probably had no idea how popular her words would become! Today, this saying has become a treasured cliché, and-- like most clichés-- it's survived because it has a grain of truth to it. And because it extols the value of dinner parties, that's exactly what we're going to explore in this chapter. So, now that we've covered some of the key building blocks of building authentic connections, let's take a look at some of our next steps.

You already know, for example, that if you want to boost your networking game, you need to be genuine, transparent, and approach all new connections with a 'mutual value added' mentality. But how do you find the people you want to network with? According to the author, you start by having them over for dinner! Now, this piece of advice comes with an important distinction: hosting a dinner party and inviting people to grab a bite with you at Chili's are two vastly different things. So, what makes the difference? And how do you do it? Well, obviously, the first step is to invite them over to your house or another suitable venue that will facilitate a pleasurable environment for your guests. (We'll explore this detail in a little more depth in the next chapter).

The next step is figuring out your guestlist; that's what makes a "mastermind dinner" different from having your college buddies over for hot dogs and beer. That's because "mastermind dinners" are characterized by a strategically planned guest list. So, start by thinking about who you want to connect with, whether that's government officials, Instagram influencers, or movers and shakers in the arts, finance, or business industries. As you plan your guest list, be careful not to limit your vision. For example, maybe you want to build a team of the best minds from a variety of different industries and you know exactly how you'll schmooze your way into their good books. But that's not the only concern at hand when you're thinking about your guest list!

You also have to consider whether your guests will get along with each other. No one wants to attend a dinner party that's stiff and awkward, after all, and no one likes to feel like they have nothing in common with the other guests. So, a good rule of thumb is to make sure that everybody at your party has at least one other person they'll enjoy talking to. This strategy can also be a big help with two of our other key points: creating an intriguing guest list and ensuring your guests will show up. For example, let's say you want to connect with one of the biggest Instagram influencers in the fashion industry. But maybe you'd also like to invite some guys from Wall Street and some leading tech moguls. It's unlikely that those people will have a lot in common. So, how do you keep your party from getting awkward? Invite someone else whose presence will be significant to each of your guests!

For example, you could invite another leading influencer-- maybe even someone your guest looks up to!-- and use your dinner party as an opportunity for them to connect. You can do the same for others in the tech and finance spheres so your other guests can engage with someone in their field. This is also likely to help with any potential attendance problems. For example, if you're reaching out to an influencer who doesn't know you from Adam, they might be skeptical about saying yes right away. But if your invitation includes a hint like, "Oh, by the way, Kylie Jenner is going to be there..." they're much more likely to attend! So, as you can see from these examples, an interesting guest list is the remedy for a 'blah' dinner party! It also provides an unexpected and awesome bonus in the form of new connections! By following this model, you will not only be able to connect with your dream team, but the guests at your party will also be able to form beneficial new relationships themselves! And that's the beauty of a 'mutual value added' dinner party.



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Hosting a Strategic Dinner

Now that we've covered a few of the basics for hosting a successful dinner, it's time to dive in to a closer analysis of a few of the specifics we mentioned earlier. In this chapter, we'll explore the importance of your atmosphere and the cultivation of a strategic dinner. Because the need for strategic planning doesn't stop at your guest list! It's called a "mastermind dinner" because a lot of thought and planning goes into every aspect of your dinner. The type of event you're hosting and the type of network you want to create are two categories that go hand in hand; you can't have one without the other, so it's important to be honest with yourself about your goals from the get-go.

For example, are you trying to connect with members of your local city council or with Elon Musk? Obviously, the answer to this question will determine everything about the atmosphere and location of your dinner. If you want to make connections on a more local level, then it will probably be easier to find an apropos venue, good food, and willing guests. But if you want to venture outside of your own social sphere, you might have to step up your game with a destination dinner. Because, let's face it, Elon Musk is highly unlikely to come over to your house for dinner if you ask him. Instead, if you want to connect with big names, you have to go to them. For example, if you wanted to meet big names in the fashion industry, it might be a good idea to fly to London for London Fashion Week, scout out some well-known haunts that are popular with your target audience, and host your dinner there! That way, when you issue your invitation, you're more likely to get a 'yes!'



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Build a Better Mousetrap

However, now that you know these top tips, there's one last trick you need to have up your sleeve! In this chapter, we're going to take a look at how to issue your invitation. We all know the old saying, "You only get one shot at a good first impression," and the same is true when it comes to invitations. Because you can plan the most awesome dinner party in the world and it will still be a failure if you don't send your invitation in the right way. So, what does "the right way" look like? Well, for starters, the author recommends issuing your invitation by email, but only if you're following the best practices of standard email etiquette.

For example, make sure your email doesn't come across as spammy or clickbait-y. An eye-catching subject heading like "Super exciting networking dinner with YOU!" might sound like a good idea, but trust me, it isn't! Instead, make your invitation simple and personal. Put the recipient's name in the subject heading, along with a simple, informative request to connect with them. This will help them to see that it's genuine and meant specifically for them. Once you've mastered the right subject heading, it's time to turn your attention to the body of the email. This should also be simple and direct. An important rule of thumb to remember is that most busy people only have time to read 2-3 lines of your email, so don't waste your valuable, limited space on a lot of background info or unnecessary details.

Instead, start with a simple template like:

"Hi, I'm _____ (your name here) and I'm reaching out to ask if you would be interested in attending a complimentary networking dinner with _____ (insert names of high-profile attendees here if applicable)."

This is a great way to introduce yourself and your idea right off the bat and increases your likelihood of receiving a positive response. And last but not least, as you craft your invitations, you should also consider the size of your

guest list. While it's tempting to invite everyone you can think of, the author observes that 4-8 people is really the ideal size. Less than four, and your guests may feel uncomfortably pressured and intimate. More than eight, and your guests may get lost in the crowd. After all, it's pretty difficult to maintain an intimate and intriguing conversation with a large crowd! So, try to keep your guest list within the 4-8 range. If you have to go above or below that number for a certain event, it's best to reschedule and try again another time.



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Final Summary

Networking with others is great! No matter what field you're in, we all want to build connections with people who can help us grow. But outside of attending boring corporate networking events, it's tough to know where to start. That's why the author recommends mastermind dinners: carefully constructed dinner parties that allow you to connect with all the right people over the course of a nice meal.

By carefully curating your guest list, your invitation, your venue, and the size of your guest list, you'll be able to craft unique and meaningful events. But if you want to ensure that your events will be successful, the author advises keeping a few more things in mind. For example, remember to be transparent and authentic. No one likes to be around someone who's fake or manipulative, so be genuine in your interactions with others. And no matter who you connect with, remember to approach each potential relationship with a 'mutual value added' mentality!



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