

NETWORKING CONNECTORS' HALL OF FAME PROFILE

[Paul Revere \(1734-1818\)](#)

from [NEVER EAT ALONE, and other secrets to success, one relationship at a time](#)

by [Keith Ferrazzi](#)

Understanding Paul Revere's legacy to the world of networking is as simple as grasping the following: Some people are much more well connected than others.

If you moved to a small town and wished, for some reason, to meet everyone in town, what would you do? Go door-to-door, greeting one resident at a time? Or would you try to find one plugged-in resident who could open all the doors for you?

The answer is clear.

Today, that plugged-in townie might be, say, the high school principal, the Little League commissioner, or the church pastor. But in Paul Revere's day-think of the 1770s in the Boston metro area-the most plugged-in people were like Revere, the owner of a silversmith shop in the city's North End, businessmen and merchants who dealt with individuals at every level of Boston society and culture.

Revere was also an extremely social individual: He formed several clubs of his own and joined many others. As a teenager, he and six friends formed a society of church bell ringers; as an adult, he joined the North Caucus Club, a society founded by Samuel Adams's father to choose candidates for local government. In 1774, when British troops began to seize munitions, Revere formed yet another club, of sorts, responsible for monitoring the movements of British troops. In addition, Revere belonged to the Masonic Lodge of St. Andrew, through which he was friendly with revolutionary activists such as James Otis and Dr. Joseph Warren.

All of which helps to explain why Revere, among all Bostonians in the year preceding the Revolution, served as courier for the Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, riding express to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. It was also he who spread the word of the Boston Tea Party to New York and Philadelphia. Revere, in short, was a man who knew not only people-he knew gossip, he knew rumors, he knew news, and he knew it from every level of Boston society.

In April 1775, Revere caught wind of British orders to capture rebel leaders and forcibly disarm the colonists. So Revere and his fellow rebels devised a warning system: Two lanterns shining from the steeple of Boston's Old North Church (the city's tallest building) indicated that the British troops were advancing on Boston by sea; one candle indicated a land advance. Either way, the rebels in Boston and its surrounding suburbs would know when and where to flee and take up arms.

We all know the "one if by land, two if by sea" part of this story. What's less known is that Revere's networking savvy is what allowed him-and maybe only him-to be the one entrusted with illuminating the church steeple.

The church, as it happened, was Anglican; the rector strongly supported the Crown. But Revere knew the vestryman, John Pulling, through the North Caucus Club. And through his shop, he knew the sexton, Robert Newman, who had a key to the building.

Revere's connections were crucial to him that fateful night. After lighting the lanterns, Revere needed to reach Lexington, to warn rebel leaders Sam Adams and John Hancock. First, two acquaintances rowed Revere across the Charles River, to Charlestown; there, a horse was waiting for Revere, lent to him by another pal, Deacon John Larkin.

Chased by Redcoats, Revere was diverted north of Lexington, to the town of Medford. Because he knew the head of Medford's military, Revere rode to his house and warned him. With the militiaman's help, Revere alerted the town of Medford before heading to Lexington.

Most of us know the Lexington part of the story. Less known is that on the same night that Revere made his midnight ride, a man named William Dawes went galloping off in the other direction to muster the militias to the west of Boston. Revere's ride stirred up an army, while something like three people showed up from the towns Dawes visited. Why? Revere was a connector: He knew everybody, and so was able to storm into one village after another, banging on all the right doors and calling out all the right people by name. Historians say Revere was blessed with an "uncanny genius for being at the center of events." But it doesn't take genius for that just involvement and active interest in your community and a friendship (or two) with a connector.