



THE BUSINESS ROMANTIC SOCIETY PRESENTS

15 Steps Toward Becoming a Business Romantic

1 Come out as a Business Romantic

If you feel that the workplace or a brand does not accommodate your full range of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual needs, it is time to come out as a Business Romantic. It is imperative that you don't just "confess" (for example, don't open the conversation by stating that you think your workplace or a brand may not be "romantic enough"); also refrain from inviting your boss to a candlelight dinner). You can start by sending subtle signals: play your favorite music through your office speakers. Surprise your colleagues and friends with a reference to a romantic writer or movie. Tell them about a moment at work or a customer experience, seemingly small and fleeting, that meant a lot to you.

2 Spot other Business Romantics

Look for the subtle, often nonverbal cues. An expressed interest in the (liberal) arts is usually a good sign. Generosity and a passion beyond work, too. You might identify an aura of secrecy, unreasonable behavior, excessive attention to detail, and other aspects of strangeness. When you're sure you have found a fellow Business Romantic, say nothing. Everything will fall into place.

3 Go on a business date with another Business Romantic

Once you have come out as a Business Romantic, and you have identified other Business Romantics within or outside your organization, this one should be easy. You have a lot to talk about. Just make sure you don't overshare and keep up the mystique. Broken hearts stay in the closet. No one wants to hear about past business relationships or flings. Trust may be built through a portfolio; attachment isn't. It's not about what you did but what you want to do together.

4 Go on a business date with a business cynic

This one is harder because many cynics are secret romantics. So double-check and do some extra due diligence before you reach out. Once you are sure that your date is a true cynic, the fun begins. At dinner, warm him or her up with personal anecdotes, then shock your date with some poetry before entrusting them with a secret you have not shared with anyone else. That will break the ice. Ask your date about the moment in which they felt the most alive. Ask them what they are afraid of and why. And then just listen.

5 Pretend to be a Business Romantic

Want to be a superhero for a day? Be a Business Romantic! Step into the shoes and psyche of your alter ego and embody and enact the Business Romantic's Rules of Enchantment, just for fun, just for a week. Or even just for a day. Be a hermit, a rebel, a contrarian, a poet. Be a stranger to yourself. Masks transform us, and yes, you can fake it until you become it!

- 6** **Start a secret project (without reason)**
Call a meeting, preferably off-site, and invite a small group of colleagues. Don't tell them the reason for the meeting, and even when you meet, do not pretend there is one. Just tell them that you would like to collaborate with them on a project that would "add value to the company and move the business forward." And then spend the whole kickoff meeting exploring together what that might be. It's a bit like Luigi Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, except that here you are in search of a project. Easy!
- 7** **Host a Business Romantic dinner**
Dinner is the most congenial and appropriate way to connect with other Business Romantics. It doesn't have to be a full-blown candlelight dinner, but a private setting in a dimly lit and quiet environment certainly helps. Limit it to fifteen guests or less. It is very difficult if not impossible to have intimate conversations—and that is what you want—with more than fifteen people around one table. Create a seating arrangement. Part of your role as a host is to make sure that your guests are in good company. They trust you to find the right neighbor for them, so don't shy away from that responsibility. Pay attention to everyone. Make your guests smile, no matter how serious the topic. Have fun!
- 8** **Host Business Romantic luncheons with your coworkers, partners, or customers**
Plan small lunches around a Business Romantic topic and invite a small group of colleagues, partners, or customers. Keep it personal and ask specific questions, for example: "What was the most romantic moment in your life and why? What can our company learn from it?" Discuss what it means to have a romantic relationship to work or to a brand. Follow up with a handwritten note. Do it again.
- 9** **Keep a diary of the brands that make your day**
From the smile of a Starbucks barista in the morning to the supersmooth check-in on a flight with Lufthansa to the Volkswagen commercial that makes you laugh in the living room at night: honor the products and services that leave you wanting more.
- 10** **Keep track of what you fail to achieve every year**
Announce it at your firm's holiday party and celebrate it with a toast.
- 11** **Smuggle a romantic element into a standard piece of collateral**
It can be a visual motif, a line from a poem, or simply language that opens up space for ambiguity and mystery when you least expect it. Annual reports are suitable publications, and so are feature sheets and sales brochures.
- 12** **Make a list of your secret loves**
Keep it in a safe place. Don't say a word. Ever. To. Anyone.
- 13** **Invite a person you want to do business with to meet with you on April 1 every year (at an undisclosed location)**
This is a classic romantic format, repopularized by movies such as *Before Sunset* or *One Day* (based on the bestselling novel). The April 1 date raises the stakes. Will they really show up (again and again)?

14 Host the Business Romantic Awards

Invite your colleagues to a ceremony at which you award the greatest Business Romantics in your firm—once a year, every quarter, or perhaps even every month.

15 Join the Business Romantic Society

The Business Romantic Society is not a formal organization—it is a secret network of like-minded individuals worldwide who meet on an ongoing basis, gather at Business Romantic dinners, exchange “love stories,” and discuss best practices. There will be an annual excursion. Still, you need to be invited. I’m at tim@thebusinessromantic.com. Send me an e-mail.