

Hello, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week, I want to talk about Benjamin Franklin's Junto. I don't know where that name came from, but that's what they refer to. It was a club that Ben Franklin and other leaders in Philadelphia formed, and they called it a club of mutual improvement. One of the characteristics was you had to display open-minded tolerance and you had to agree to lift up the other people in the Junto. And did it work? I mean, did this idea that putting brains together regularly to discuss business and personal issues, did it work? Well, yeah, you have to say it did. Benjamin Franklin was incredibly successful. He was America's first domestic millionaire. He, along with the Junto, they came up with the ideas for the first volunteer fire department, the first post office in America, and the first public lending library. So, you have to say that it was successful over time.

Now, what about this is important to you? Well, there were some great questions that the Junto regularly asked themselves, and I think we can all benefit from those. And then the idea of getting together for mutual improvement with your peers is obviously one that FBI embraces. There were nine questions that the Junto regularly asked. Is there something you need help with? Is anyone here starting a new project and is there a way we can help? Is there anyone who's doing innovative work that we should learn more about? Is there anyone whose friendship we want? Man, that's a great question. How can we use our networks to help each other? Is there anyone that we can mentor and encourage? How about that? That's a great question too. Can we give one another any personal or professional advice? Can we improve anything about the circle itself? Are there ways the circle should be connecting with and contributing to nearby communities? All great, rather altruistic questions, wouldn't you say?

People in modern times today are creating what they call Benjamin Franklin circles, or their own local Juntos. Some of the quotes that people in the article refer to, "Room full of smart, thoughtful people," "I was challenged to face things about my own habits," "It was painful, but constructive." So, you can see getting together in these circles, if you will, is actually quite a valuable thing. There may even be health benefits. So, Stanford Professor Greg Walton, called this circle, these Juntos, he called them belonging interventions. And he said that the exercise of participating in these circles gives participants the sense that they're not alone, and that's psychologically very uplifting. "It increased subjects' happiness and reduced cognitive activation of negatives for years after the intervention." So better physical and mental health as a result of a Junto or a circle.

Now, what's another modern iteration of the Junto? Well, peer groups, obviously. So, if you're not in a peer group in your industry ... Contractors, obviously, we want to join our peer groups. But if you're in another industry, whether it's agriculture or home remodeling or whatever it might be, find a peer group. Find your own Junto. You'll get wonderful business benefits. You'll be surprised at the personal and the mental health benefits that you'll get. And who knows? According to Professor Walton, maybe there's some physical benefits too. We'd like to hear from you. What do you think?

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