



How to ... Network

1. What is networking?

For a head hunter, networking is all about visibility and profile.

If I don't know about you, or if nobody tells me about you, why should I be aware of you or approach you about a job?

2. Creating your own network

Create six lists of names, 100 names on each:

List A – people you know really well, who will easily return your calls, including friends and family

List B – people in your current or most recent organisation

List C – people you know and they know you, but if you're honest with yourself, you haven't actually spoken to them for a couple of years

List D – people who have tried to network with you, but you have never networked back (think of all those business cards collected in the back of the drawer)

List E – people you don't know, but would surely love to know

List F – whoever occupies that role in that organisation would be an ace contact, it's just that you don't know who it is, so you'll have to research and get a name, and then slot them into whichever List A-E is relevant Y

Our mission is, over time, to manoeuvre everyone up to list A category

3. Effort required

Different effort is needed dependent on your situation:

When gainfully employed and just keeping the network ticking over – 2 calls a day are for you

When looking to make a move within 6-12 months, then 5 calls a day are for you

When looking to make a move asap, then 10 calls a day are for you

If you don't make your quota today, you make it up tomorrow; if you don't make it up by the end of the week, then you punish yourself. You are not allowed to go out, or give yourself the reward you had promised yourself when you started the week. This is not a game – this is your career!

4. Getting going

Find different ways of staying in touch. One time, a phone call; next time a letter; next time an email; next time a copy of an article, and next time a postcard. Vary your approach.

Phone calls are not a substitute for every other forms of communication. Letters, faxes, emails – these are all extra, if you choose to send them

Phone calls should be made first thing in the morning – get them out of the way

After three rings with no reply, don't put the handset down in relief. Stick with it till somebody answers or you hit voicemail

5. A Good Networker

There are many attributes to the good networker:

Look good, feel good, sound good. A lot of life is about attitude and state of mind. Look miserable, feel rotten, and sound sour – then you probably are. The latter qualities, attitudes or behaviours do not make for good networkers.

Always prepare – who, what, why, return. Who are you networking with? What do you want to get out of the meeting? What, if anything, could you do for them in return?

Above all, what favours could you do for them? Prepare to handle rejection. Remember, not everyone is going to love you. So, don't make it your problem. Leave it as their's.

Keep your promises, commitments and hit your deadlines. If you say you'll check up on a bit of information for somebody, do it. Treat other people as you would wish to be treated.

Maintain/obtain a sense of humour. Don't be a boring dork, or the type where a smile would crack your face. If you haven't got a sense of humour, then get one – fast.

Help other people. Don't get a PHD (a 'put him/her down') syndrome. Think about what you can do for other people, before working out what they can do for you.

Align yourselves with people who have standards and ethics you believe in. Find people with whom you can 'resonate'.

Find 2-3 mentors. Be a mentor to others, by all means, but find your own too. You're never too old (or too young) to take advice.

Build bridges. Don't just build contacts and lists. Look to try and meet people at least half-way.

Use your network. Any decision is better made after consultation and debate. So use the network.

Prepare for a marathon, and not a sprint. Get your building blocks sorted out first. Don't assume this will all be done in a week or two. It may take months.

Errors and setbacks are a way of life. It's how we learn. The lessons from our errors and setbacks are what make the difference. Learn to network better.

Believe that you can do it. Yes, networking is tough, but you'll never succeed unless you believe, so don't let anyone else tell you that you can't.

The most unlikely people may be the most helpful. So make friends with secretaries and support staff. All that time spent being pleasant and courteous to the support staff, recognising voices and remembering names will reap dividends.

Never assume somebody is unimportant. You never know who is married to whom, related to whom, having a relationship with whom, friends of whom... you just never know. It pays to be courteous to everyone.

Be humble. Ask other people for their advice and opinion. They'll be flattered, and more likely to give you more information than they intended and save you a lot of work.

What goes around, comes around. Life is about balance. What you get out of it depends a lot on what you put into it. In a cynical world, don't you be. It will pay off eventually.

Look ahead to future developments. Try and create the space to reflect on where things are going and how they are likely to develop. Think about the new skills, competencies and contacts that both you and your organisation are going to need.

Don't be too picky, too early. People may try to network with you where there is no immediate match of needs. However, we live in a rapidly changing world where change is the only constant.

Be personable. Wander around the building incessantly, play the phones like a master, give other people credit for things that you've had a hidden hand in, work ceaselessly on relationships and be open minded and positive.

Don't let the world pass you by. What are you doing to increase your intellectual capital and stave off the competition? Don't complain if your boss decides to trade you in for a younger model if the last time you let a new idea in was when you left school.

Prioritise your efforts. Keep a list, mental or otherwise, of people you know or suspect can and will help you – and cultivate them. Be ruthless about this. Always keep your contact details up to date in order to cultivate and develop your network.

Let this be the last time that you have to create or re-create your network. Cherish it, sustain it, nourish it, and above all, stay in touch with it. Get into the habit of **networking for life**.

BUT ... above and beyond everything else

Stop thinking about what your network can do for you. Rather, start thinking about what you can do for your network. See to assemble moral debts that people owe you. After all, why should I put myself out for you? Either because I like you or I feel indebted to you and want to do you a favour. Why might I want to do you a favour? Because I like you or because I feel I owe you.

Don't expect people to walk over the bridge to you – you walk over to them, and then do them a favour. Find a way, somehow, to create within your contacts a sense of moral debt, such that they would be only too pleased to do something for you. Now we are getting into really sophisticated networking.

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