Weaving Your Network

Network weaving is the conscious and deliberate process of building networks. The term used is weaving, as opposed to building, because of the need to continually connect threads, patch holes, and create patterns. The work of the network weaver is to strengthen relationships and build trust within networks.

The top 20% of performers in organizations tend to:

- Invest in relationships to extend expertise and avoid biases and career traps
- Build high-quality relationships
- Position themselves at key points in the network and leverage people around them for implementation
- Cultivate select ties with external experts

*People who serve as bridges are more likely to be in the organization’s top 20% of performers*

It’s also important to consider the different kinds of networks needed by professionals:

- Operational network: Who do you need to interact with in order to get things done?
- Personal network: Who do you need to interact with in order to develop professionally?
- Strategic network: Who do you need to interact with in order to build the future you want?

*High performers tend to all three types of networks*

Mapping Your Professional Network

Purpose
To identify and analyze your professional network.

Process
1. Brainstorm a list of people you interact with professionally and list them under the “Contacts” column on the following page. Consider, as you do:
   - Work colleagues
   - Members in your professional organizations
   - Former bosses, colleagues, and other job contacts
   - Vendors, consultants, and other suppliers
   - Coaches, mentors, and advisors
   - School classmates
   - People you talk with about work

2. Now identify the differences between you and your contacts:
   - Who works in different industries?
   - Who has different expertise?
   - Who has a different viewpoint?

3. Next mark the frequency each relationship:
   - Not frequent enough
   - Just right
   - Too frequent

4. As your last step, assess the strength of each relationship:
   - Not strong enough
   - Just right
   - Too strong
# Professional Network Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacts</th>
<th></th>
<th>Differences (check as applicable)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Type of Network (check as applicable)</th>
<th>Relationship Strength (check one)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Different Industry</td>
<td>Different Expertise</td>
<td>Different Viewpoint</td>
<td>Operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marty</td>
<td></td>
<td>X Oncology</td>
<td>X Recruiting</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Marty: Oncology X Recruiting X Operational X Personal X Strategic X Too strong X Just right X Not strong enough
Analyzing Your Professional Network

After you have completed the matrix, review and reflect on your network with these questions:

- **High Performance Networking.** Who, in your network, helps you extend your expertise in areas you need? Who helps you avoid biases and career traps? How well connected are you to these people? What other expertise areas do you need covered in your network?

- **Operational Networking.** Who do you need to interact with in order to get things done on the job? How well connected are you to these people?

- **Personal Networking.** Who do you need to interact with in order to develop professionally? How well connected are you to these people?

- **Strategic Networking.** Who do you need to interact with in order to build the future you want? How well connected are you to these people?
Filling the Gaps in Your Professional Network

Filling the Gaps. What actions can help you fill the gaps in your network?
Network Traps

From Cross, Thomas, & Light, “How Top Talent Uses Networks and Where Rising Stars Get Trapped.”

**Bottleneck:** A person who is overwhelmed by people needing information, documents to approve, and tasks to perform. A lot of people in the network need this person to complete their work. *Remedy:* Find information, decisions, and tasks that can be reallocated and/or mentor others to provide backup.

**Formalist:** Believes in the power of the hierarchy to get things done. Ignores the network as a viable and effective complement and supplement to the hierarchy. As a result, tends to miss important connections, take longer to get things done, and get frustrated with the system. *Remedy:* Identify brokers, informal decision makers, and other key network players and align with the formal system.

**Biased learner:** Makes decisions and draws information from a set, fairly closed group of contacts. Relies on those ties while neglecting other connections. *Remedy:* Identify areas of overinvestment and underinvestment and take steps to balance the network.

**Disconnected Expert:** Very good and knowledgeable in a specific area, but not well connected or knowledgeable about other areas. Makes oneself vulnerable with a narrow focus. *Remedy:* Identify skill gaps and build ties to those who can help fill gaps.

**Surface networker:** Only goes to the network when **something** is needed. Doesn’t reciprocate easily or often. *Remedy:* Refocus attention on what can be offered, not just what can be received, and build relationships with critical individuals.

Which network trap are you most likely to fall into? What can you do about it?
Recommended Resources

If you’re interested in learning more, try these excellent resources. My favorites are marked with a ★.


