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Networking in a virtual world... and why you need a personal Board of Directors

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What I hope you leave with today



1. Habit formation and goals are essential
2. Think long term
3. Get weak ties to come to you → Host "Office Hours"
4. Build your Personal Board of Directors

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Why network? Your personal capital

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Social Capital
Connections (and Disconnections)
Among People You Know



Human Capital
Knowledge and Skills

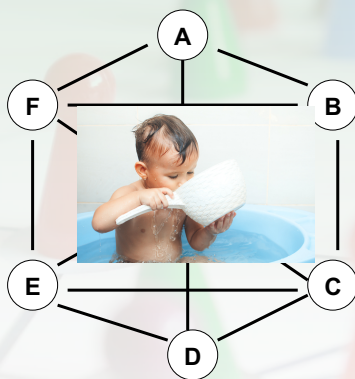
Your career

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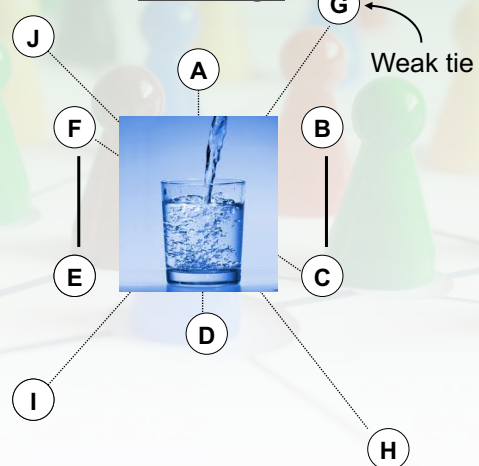
Origins of social capital: Network properties

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Closure



Brokerage



Brokerage: bridging two (or more) unconnected groups or individuals

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Developing Your Network...Remotely

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But I'm not good at that / It feels dirty / I hate networkers

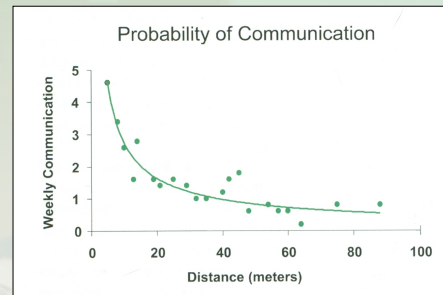


Personality Trait/ Behaviour	Making or strengthening ties?	Value exchange (give <i>and</i> take)
Extraversion	+	—
Agreeableness & Conscientiousness	—	+
Openness	+	+
Networking	+	—
Relationship building	+	+

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Reminder: our biases

- **Similarity** (homophily)
- **Proximity** (ease)
- **Inertia** → We repeat interactions and communications with the same people



It was *possible* to overcome these in an office environment.
But in a post-COVID world...
WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

Source: Allen and Henn, 2007. *The Organization and Architecture of Innovation*, p. 57

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Networking: Forming new habits



**“Net*work*ing is 1%
inspiration and 99%
hard *work*”**

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Forming new habits → Have a plan



1. Determine **goals** → Where do you want to be in the next 1-3 years?
 - Check in with yourself and update regularly
2. **Track**/log your behavior → Use a “To Do” app
 - Make sure you can set reminders, keep notes, etc (I use Wunderlist)
 - Create one “To Do” list called “Contacts”
 - “Practice” **regularly**
3. Figure out the **who**
 - Max of 50-100 **medium** and **weak** ties to cultivate over the next 1-2 years
 - Get **warm intros** if there’s someone (unknown) you **need** on your list
 - Sort into “B’s” (medium ties to contact 3-4x/year) & “C’s” (weak ties to contact 1-2x/year)
 - Start “pinging” ~2-3 people per week: keep it short, sweet, informative, and friendly

Inspired by / adapted from Keith Ferrazzi's “Never Eat Alone.”

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Networking habit-building: Tips & reminders



- **The 80/20 rule:** 80% of networking is simply being in touch regularly
- Don’t be afraid to take “long shots” if someone’s interesting to you
 - In general, recognize that some people won’t respond—that’s OK (< 5% for cold “calls”)
- **Whatever you do, do your homework!**
 - Why should someone respond to you? What’s your story?
- **Behavior first, attitude will follow** → repetition > willpower
 - Be kind to yourself: small changes add up over time!

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Think long term

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1. Create connections *before you need them*

2. Give first, give value, make connections

3. Use the *norm of reciprocity* & the “Five-Minute Favor”

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Get weak ties to come to you: Office Hours

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I've decided to hold (virtual) office hours!

They're *open to anyone* who wants 15-30 minutes to chat. Sign up for a Zoom meeting via the link below.

Why am I doing this?

Well, if you've ever taken a class with me, you know how I feel about networking & relationship building. But more than that, I've been feeling a bit like a non-contributing member of society during this lockdown, and wanted to figure a way to give something (small) of value...at this point, that amounts to my time and knowledge.

Plus, with two kids under 3, short blocks of time is about all I can piece together for work-related activities. Might as well do something socially stimulating.

So...want to discuss/ask something about organizations, networks/networking, creativity, music, management, getting a PhD or MBA, your career, my product executive program, life*, or whatever? You can sign up here:

<https://lnkd.in/dnwZwh5> <-- April is fully booked. Now you can go here:

<https://lnkd.in/d8KJit9>

*You're getting what you pay for on this one.

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Get weak ties to come to you: Office Hours



1. Block 1-2 hours of 15, 20, or 30-min blocks every week or two
 - Calendly is a good tool for this
2. **Announce to the world*** that you're open for conversations
3. **Dissuade closer friends** from signing up (find other time for them)
4. Wash, rinse, repeat → 4/week x 30 weeks/year = **120 convos/year**

*LinkedIn, Facebook, your social media site of choice, your company intranet, etc.

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Office Hours: But, but, but!



1. Zoom fatigue!
2. Useless/dumb meetings!
3. People trying to sell me something!
4. I have nothing of interest to offer! → **Curse of Knowledge**

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Build your Personal Board of Directors



- For advice, direction, help, & guidance (on short notice)
- Could be very structured, could be more informal...it's what you're comfortable with
- Mentors, peers, advisors, former colleagues/bosses/professors...
- But what's in it for them?

“I hope at some point in your career you get to be a mentor to someone like you...just so you understand.”

Adapted from Gibson Biddle (<https://medium.com/@gibsonbiddle/hacking-your-product-management-career-cce227a9c39a>)

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Why care about having mentors / a BoD?



- Professional benefits:
 - Quicker advancement
 - Higher salaries
 - Higher job & career satisfaction
 - Stronger org commitment & identification
- Personal benefits:
 - Better physical health & self-esteem
 - Happier with work-life integration
 - Stronger relational skills
 - Improved empathy

If the mentors are “strong” / “good”

If mentors are poorly chosen, not committed,
unnecessarily harmful, or even simply not a good fit,
there are plenty of downsides

Source: <https://hbr.org/2020/07/why-your-mentorship-program-isnt-working>

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What are we talking about?




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"A coach talks **to** you, a mentor talks **with** you, and a sponsor talks **about** you."*

* Roles may sometimes overlap

Think of a mentor as a cross between an advisor and a (constrained!) therapist.

At the end of the day: These are all **relationships**

COACH	MENTOR	SPONSOR
 <p>A coach provides guidance for your development, often focused on soft skills (e.g., active listening) rather than technical skills (e.g., financial acumen).</p>	 <p>A mentor informally or formally helps you navigate your career, providing guidance for career choices and decisions.</p>	 <p>A sponsor is a senior leader or other person who uses strong influence to help you obtain high-visibility assignments, promotions, or jobs.</p>
<p>Who Drives the Relationship? You and your coach are responsible for driving the relationship—you can reach out to your coach when you need help, but your coach can also reach out to you.</p>	<p>Who Drives the Relationship? You drive the relationship. Your mentor is reactive and responsive to your needs.</p>	<p>Who Drives the Relationship? The sponsor drives the relationship, advocating for you in many settings, including behind closed doors.</p>
<p>Actions Provide development feedback outside the formal performance evaluation process.</p>	<p>Actions Help you determine possible career paths to meet specific career goals.</p>	<p>Actions Advocate for your advancement and champion your work and potential with other senior leaders.</p>

So make the relationship(s) primary

Source: Catalyst, Coaches, Mentors, and Sponsors: Understanding the Differences. New York: Catalyst, December 11, 2014.

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Fundamentally, what is relationship building about?

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Relationships =
Social exchanges
over time

You can take out
what you put in

What you put in:

- Effort / Commitment
- Value
- **Trustworthiness**

This holds for you & your board members / mentors!

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Build your Personal Board of Directors

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WHO	HOW
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. People whose experience and judgment you value and take seriously2. Admirable skills, broad network3. Trustworthy!4. Care about you personally5. People whom you're comfortable asking for help	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. No need to "DTR"; nurture2. Aim high3. Look to your "weak ties" & friends of friends4. Figure out how you can help them (now or in the future)5. Patience, persistence, thick skin

Adapted from Gibson Biddle (<https://medium.com/@gibsonbiddle/hacking-your-product-management-career-cce227a9c39a>)

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Your Board: Tips on engaging

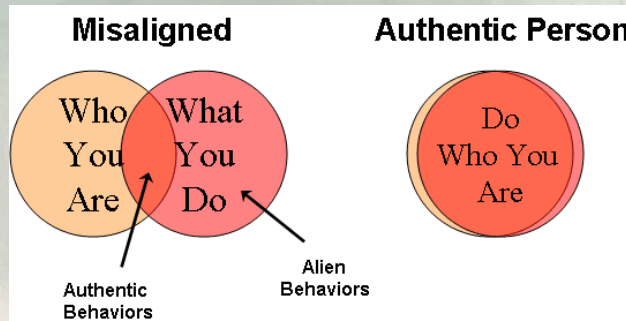
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1. **Invest & inform** (especially when things are going well)
 - People don't want to hear from you just when things suck or you need something
2. Encourage (and welcome) direct, honest feedback
3. **LISTEN**
4. Adapt your board to your **current and future needs**
5. Seek the right **diversity**

Adapted from Gibson Biddle (<https://medium.com/@gibsonbiddle/hacking-your-product-management-career-cce227a9c39a>)

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In closing: the importance of authenticity & curiosity



Authenticity is the feeling of alignment between who you are and your behaviors

Curiosity is approaching the world as if you always have something to learn

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In closing: the importance of authenticity & curiosity



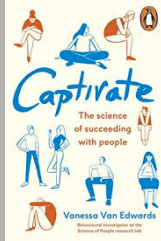
If you're authentically curious, networking won't feel gross...

...and if you consider it to be learning—or even *giving*—it might even feel good.

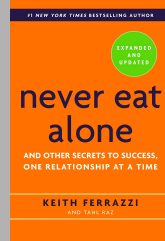
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Book recommendations

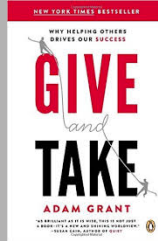
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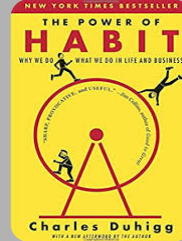
"Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People"
By Vanessa Van Edwards



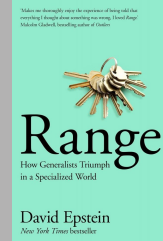
"Never Eat Alone (And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time)"
By Keith Ferrazzi



"Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success"
By Adam Grant



"The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business"
By Charles Duhigg



"Range: How Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World"
By David Epstein

And a podcast:



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