

Building a Network Map

Step 1: Know Your Purpose

What type of map do you need right now? Operational, Personal, or Strategic.

What is it that is making you want to consider your network? What is the problem you are trying to solve?

What do you need or hope for in this season?

- Leverage relationships within your organization to complete a project or initiative
- Develop and grow your career
- Change careers and find new employment
- Increase your contacts for development, participation, or referrals
- Build a network in a new location

Write this purpose taking up minimal space at the top of a blank sheet of paper.

Step 2: Put Yourself in the Center

Write your name in the center of the page and draw a circle around it.

Take between 5-10 minutes (or as long as you like) to pause and reflect on yourself. Before we can know and relate to others, we need to have a good sense of self.

- Where are you at in your life right now?
- What is important to you?
- What is driving you towards the purpose you identified in step 1?
- What bodily sensations or emotions come up for you as you consider this purpose?
- What challenges do you anticipate, or fears do you have? How might you overcome these?
- How do you feel in general about networking?

Sit with yourself and acknowledge whatever comes up for you in this moment.

You can think about these questions or use a separate piece of paper to journal your responses. Before moving to step 3, revisit your purpose. Has anything changed? If so, revise your purpose.

Step 3: Identify Your Evangelists*

Draw a line from your name to another section of the page and write the word "Evangelists" and draw a circle around it. Then draw lines from that circle where you can add the names of 4-5 people who you consider to be your evangelists.

Before you add names, look at your purpose again and then consider these questions to help you identify these people.

- Who are the people in your life that are your greatest supporters and provide “public relations” for you? Try to think of people who fit this role that are not your family or friends.
- Who are the people that compliment your work or other related professional characteristics? Think about not only the times someone complimented you personally, but also when they complimented you in front of a colleague or supervisor. Has anyone said to you, “Name” has great things to say about you or thinks the world of you?
- Who do you use as your job references? Are they evangelists? Do they fit within your purpose?
- What about the people you worked with on your latest or past initiatives or achievements?
- Was there a particular person who was instrumental in your last career change?

You want people who will shout your great works from the roof tops and not think twice about helping you in your purpose.

* I am using “Evangelists” as a term I picked up from Ballinger, Marcia and Perez, Nathan A. *The 20-Minute Networking Meeting*. Career Innovations Press, 2012.

Step 4: Identify Your Kindred Spirits*

Draw a line from your name to another section of the page and write the word “Kindred Spirits” and draw a circle around it. Think of the people of your heart. The people that would be your “ride or die” professional colleagues. Then draw lines from that circle where you can add the names of 4-5 people as kindred spirits.

Before you add names, look at your purpose again and then consider these questions to help you identify these people.

- Who are the people that you think of when you have an idea you want to share or an idea you want their input on?
- Who are the people that you would seek to have work with you on a project or initiative?
- Who do you collaborate well with?
- Consider your peers, co-workers, perhaps people you have met through professional groups or conferences.
- These should be people you feel really comfortable being around and working with closely.

* I am using “Kindred Spirits” as a term I picked up from Hunter, Mark Lee and Ibarra, Herminia. “How Leaders Create and Use Networks.” *Harvard Business Review*. January 2007.

Step 5: Identify Your Challengers

Draw a line from your name to another section of the page and write the word “Challengers” and draw a circle around it. Then draw lines from that circle where you can add the names of 4-5 people as challengers. This one may seem counterintuitive in networking and I haven’t seen it in other network maps. I have personally found I have grown the most from interacting with people that initially annoy, frustrate, or challenge me.

Before you add names, look at your purpose again and then consider these questions to help you identify these people.

- Who are the people that you tend to clash with? Think about times you left a meeting and were so grateful to get away from that person.
- Consider people who approach problem solving differently than you—someone more numbers or bottom line focused or someone more focused on gut-level decisions.
- Who are the people that puzzle you? Make you feel like you just really don't understand where they are coming from or why they propose certain ideas?
- Consider people with different professional backgrounds than yourself.

Overall, you want to have people identified here if they are someone who you can connect with but perhaps aren't the people you would normally think to speak to or want to collaborate with. Think about how you might use the possibility of networking with them to change the narrative of your relationship with them or how they might open up new or previously unknown possibilities for connection. Understanding how these people see/interpret you will help you understand how to navigate situations with more like-minded people.

Step 6: Identify Your Connectors

Draw a line from your name to another section on the page and write the word "Connectors" and draw a circle around it. Then draw lines from that circle where you can add the names of 4-5 people as connectors. Think of people that you may not necessarily know very well, but who you know have a vast network. Engaging positively with them could lead to multiple mutually beneficial connections with their network.

Before you add names, look at your purpose again and then consider these questions to help you identify these people.

- Who are the people that you know that it seems like everyone you meet knows?
- Consider people who organize the professional group you participate in or even people who organize personal activities you are involved in.
- Who are the leaders of local community organization and government leaders?
- Maybe there is a person's name you have heard as being well connected that you have not yet met. Write their name down and consider how you might get an introduction to this person.

Step 7: Identify Your Mentors

Draw a line from your name to another section on the page and write the word "Mentors" and draw a circle around it. Then draw lines from that circle where you can add the names of 4-5 people as mentors. These are people you can turn to when you need advice and guidance.

Before you add names, look at your purpose again and then consider these questions to help you identify these people.

- Who is in a more senior position than yours and perhaps a position you aspire to?
- Who has more years of experience than you in your current role that you admire?
- Who do you know that has a particular quality or skill mastered—an area you want to develop within yourself?
- Who do you know has said they are open to mentoring or have you heard others mention as a great mentor?

- Do any of your professional groups have mentorship programs? Is there a professional group you can join that has a mentorship program?

Step 8: Analyze Your Map

Now that your map is complete, take some time to analyze it. It is important when you analyze your map that you keep your purpose in mind. If your purpose was operational then you should expect to find that most people in your network map know one another. If your purpose was building a network in a new location, then you probably don't want to have many people that know one another. If you want to be promoted, then you may want to have most people in your network be more senior than you. If you want to deepen your experience within your current position, then you will want more peers in your network.

There is no right and wrong here. You are simply noting if the map you have created will serve your purpose. Analyzing it will help you see if it does or doesn't. If it doesn't, then you will more clearly see the areas you need to reconsider and can make those changes.

1. Is there anyone that you would want to move to a different category?
2. Is there someone who comes to mind that you are surprised didn't end up on your map? Is there anyone else you want to add to a category?
3. How many people in your network know one another? Draw lines connecting the people in your network map that know one another. The more people that know one another means that your network may be more densely focused in a particular area, i.e. your industry, denomination, workplace, profession.
4. Consider your horizontal and vertical relationships. How many people on your map would you consider to be peers? How many hold a more senior position to you?
5. Now consider demographics of your group:
 - a. How many people are in the same industry as you?
 - b. How many people work at your same organization? (You can skip this if you were drawing an operational map)
 - c. How many live in the same geographic area?
 - d. How many are the same race/ethnicity as you? Gender? Sexual Orientation? Differently Abled? Religion?

Step 9: Revise and Set Some Goals

Based on your analysis, make any changes you think you need to make to your network. You may need to complete some research to identify the names of people you need to add. Overall, don't get too caught up in getting it just right because networks will grow and change. It is more important that you set some goals and get to work in connecting with people in your network. Consider how will you know that your networking efforts have been successful? How can you measure this? It could be outreach efforts made whether or not the person responds, or the number of new connections made or virtual coffee chats set up, etc. You can reference my presentation for ideas on how to get started. I would also recommend the book, *The 20-Minute Networking Meeting*, by Marcia Ballinger and Nathan A. Perez for how you can structure networking meetings. It is business focused but you can adjust their guidance to fit your need.