

Networkling

Building Relationships and Opportunities for Success

Melissa Giovagnoli and Jocelyn Carter-Miller

Chapter One: What Is Networkling, Anyway?

Networkling is a transforming concept in a world where connections to everyone and everything really count. It provides us with a fresh vision of how to move forward in our lives and careers, a vision that is very much in keeping with our rapidly changing environment. Networkling is rooted in our connected society of information technology and the Internet, where we measure our accomplishments by a new yardstick--not just by pay and promotions. Instead, we look to gain new skills and experiences and want to work on fun, exciting projects with people we respect and like. We perform our jobs in our offices and while on the move. We teleconference and share knowledge with a broad, perhaps even global, group of colleagues. For many of us, the line between personal and professional blurs, and some of us are hard-pressed to differentiate between work and fun.

Peter Drucker asked his MBA students what they would call this connected society, and they responded, "We'd call it the New Network Society." That's close but not quite it. Network suggests a traditional model of connections, but we've evolved beyond this tradition. Network connections are often superficial, and we're seeing people connect in ways that are far deeper and more meaningful. We all have the potential to make incredible linkages with each other and to leverage these linkages in powerful ways. To do so, we need to understand how we are all connected and how to use these connections for mutual gain. Just as importantly, we must make a dramatic shift in our professional and personal strategies for getting ahead. This shift is from a "me" perspective to the more leveraged "we" perspective, and it means forming and maintaining relationships in radically different ways.

Networkling is the strategy that will allow you to achieve these ambitious objectives. It facilitates your developing multilevel connections with others and creating new opportunities that benefit yourself, your colleagues, and your community. Networkling goes well beyond the traditional relationship-building techniques of networking and fits into the fluid, almost organic nature of our new world of work. Let's examine what Networkling is, especially in the context of what networking has been.

Networkling Versus Networking

Certainly there is a passing resemblance between Networkling and networking--both revolve around the concept of forming relationships. But the resemblance ends as soon as you understand that Networkling requires clear intent, compatible values, reciprocal exchange and support, and mutually developed, mutually beneficial outcomes.

Networkling is a purposeful process of collaboration that not only achieves mutual goals but also leads to professional and personal fulfillment. In contrast, networking is an often haphazard process of making contacts to achieve short-term and often one-sided goals. In addition, Networkling is opportunity-expansive, whereas networking is opportunity-specific. This means that in a networkling relationship a series of opportunities flow from the partnership, whereas in a network relationship people come together to take

advantage of a specific opportunity at best. The differences between the two concepts become clear when you consider the experiences of Robert, a consummate networker, and those of Bonita, a Networking maven.

Robert began his career during college when he became a waiter in a prestigious hotel. Because of his outgoing nature and ability to provide superb service, he was a favorite of hotel guests. When Robert wanted a higher-paying job with a good future, he began asking around. One of the guests offered him a sales position. With his contacts and service orientation, he quickly became very successful. He then set his sights on a business that he could own. He became a respected publishing entrepreneur who today knows most of the community and business leaders in his area.

Robert is never without his networking tool kit--business cards, organizer, and promotional giveaways--because he never knows when or where a new referral may take place. His contacts have enabled him to keep abreast of local stories and to attract a consistent set of advertisers. Yet he has not received the necessary support to expand his media empire in the ways he would like, and the time he has invested in his constant networking has also hurt his relationships with close family and friends.

Despite his networking success, Robert is dissatisfied. Part of the problem is his insecurity and guilt. He feels uncomfortable about having "used" people to get what he wanted while giving them relatively little in return. Although he has a vast number of relationships, very few are of the quality he would like. His contacts have helped him achieve entrepreneurial goals, but those goals quickly lost their luster. Robert hoped for much more than his networking success has provided. He harbored dreams of expanding his publishing business into other media, especially the Internet; he always wanted to be a leader in his field and introduce new ideas and innovations to publishing. Just as important, Robert hoped to find like-minded people in his field with whom he could build something new and worthwhile. Sometimes when talking to his business partners and direct reports, he has felt that people are only listening to him because they have to. There is no real sense of connection, and as a result Robert has found it difficult to be open with them and to engage in dialogues that are energizing and highly productive. In the last few years, Robert has found himself merely going through the motions, and his lack of attention and emotional involvement has hurt his publishing business.

Now let's contrast Robert's experiences with those of a networker. Bonita, who is skilled at math and finances, was always driven by a desire to help the economically disadvantaged achieve financial stability. After college, Bonita found a job in a small accounting firm in New York. She convinced the firm that it was in their interest to support her professional and community activities because it would also mean additional business and recruiting opportunities for them. Through her formal and informal activities, Bonita realized that the poor could benefit greatly from expense management advice and investment education. She needed to identify and connect with individuals who could help provide this type of information.

Bonita pursued relationships with investment-savvy individuals who were also community-oriented. Before meeting with each of these individuals she clearly thought about the potential opportunities and benefits that both of them would be likely to realize from their relationship. She knew that just passing out her card was a waste of time and wanted instead to establish relationships with people who not only possessed the requisite skills but shared her beliefs. After contacting and meeting them, Bonita nurtured and strengthened these relationships by regularly giving and receiving emotional support as well as information.

Many opportunities flowed from these relationships. Bonita was able to help the disadvantaged in ways that continue to expand in new directions, including offering financial seminars for the poor and making television and radio talk show appearances. At the same time, she introduced the influential people who assisted her to each other, and they pursued projects of mutual interest. Bonita also helped some of her connections learn that they could do good work and make money simultaneously, and this realization was gratifying to everyone in Bonita's network. It should come as no surprise that Bonita now has her own highly successful investment firm and partners with different people to put on seminars for the economically disadvantaged around the country.

Bonita used Networking to create mutually beneficial opportunities that fit with her sense of purpose. As the new opportunities and benefits emerged, she expanded her circle to include others. Bonita understood the connections between her intentions, values, opportunities, and other people, and this is what helped her and her network succeed in ways that would not have been possible if she'd taken a networking path.

Apples and Oranges: Specific Distinctions Between Networking and Networking

Bonita's and Robert's experiences are clearly different, but the differences between Networking and networking are not always so easily understood. Part of the problem is that there is some overlap; both involve trying to meet influential people who can help in some way. Let's examine Networking and networking in detail so that the two become distinct concepts.

Intent is a key word in Networking. We use it to mean forming relationships and opportunities intentionally--being highly conscious about the underlying values, goals, and beliefs that drive you toward a specific relationship or opportunity. Your intent may be to obtain a specific job or to establish a certain type of business but it is also to know what beliefs and values are important to you as you pursue these goals.

Dwight, a networker, is a successful educator in his mid-thirties. His intent was to improve the education of disadvantaged youths. He was intensely aware that he valued education, that he believed it was an underutilized tool in poor communities, and that there was a need to apply it in more imaginative, aggressive ways. Dwight identified a series of goals that would need to be met in order to realize his intent and also identified people who shared his values and beliefs and could help him achieve the goals. With the support of community, businesses, and other educators, Dwight created a new curriculum, instructional method, and school design that significantly improved students' academic performance and self-esteem.

The intent in Networking is thus multidimensional. In contrast, networking is one-dimensional, focused on achieving one goal by making the right contacts. The multidimensionality in Networking involves goals that are linked to values and beliefs. You need to form relationships that encompass more than one factor. It may be that your values demand you fulfill not one but a series of goals; you may have to search for people with both the disparate skills and shared beliefs necessary to achieve successive goals.

Networking doesn't happen by accident. You must identify and communicate your intent to make something happen. In a highly purposeful manner, you must keep your dream in mind as you search for and form relationships.

It's also important to understand that while networking can be a selfish activity, Networking is not a completely selfless endeavor either. You enter into Networking relationships recognizing that they involve a continuous exchange of information, ideas,

opportunities, and support. Friends, colleagues, and associates who are attracted to this idea of exchange will help you achieve your goals as you help them achieve theirs.

Usually, Networkding relationships start when you clearly express your intent in the broad sense. Quickly and convincingly, you communicate your goals and values, and when you do, people who resonate to your intent will respond. This requires taking some risk--you're revealing who you are and risking rejection. But you're also playing for higher stakes than in networking. If someone responds positively and you are able to establish a Networkding relationship, you can reap tremendous benefits. Your new partner will not only provide you with more opportunities but also provide an empathic ear and a source of fresh ideas.

Networking exists on a much more superficial level. In most instances, networkers use a scattergun approach to develop many contacts and referrals. The theory is that the more contacts they make, the greater the odds that one will pay off. As a result, networking is a time-consuming and frustrating activity. With networking, you spend most of your time not achieving your goals because you're not searching intentionally. It's like going out on blind dates or making cold calls; you figure if you do an activity enough, it will eventually yield something of value. It might, but only after you've wasted an absurd amount of energy. Even worse, you might not realize that a contact is of value because you haven't defined your intent for yourself or the other person.

The Networkding Support Exchange Model

We refer to networking connections as flimsy because they lack support. In networking, people are bound together because one person needs another to do a deal or create a sale. One particular situation binds them together, and as soon as this situation disintegrates or disappears, there's nothing left to hold the relationship together. Networkders, in contrast, are connected by the ascending levels of support shown in the support exchange model. (See Figure 1.1.)

The model illustrates the hierarchy of the development of relationships, which evolves from a conscious communication exchange process with a select group of people.

Emotional support. This is the part of consciousness that involves feelings. Our feelings about others serve as the foundation for our relationships. The focus of exchanging emotional support with another is to create rapport, a relationship of mutual trust and affinity.

Informational support. Information is a combination of messages. Once initial rapport is built, we then feel comfortable to share information of value.

Knowledge support. Here, we add the element of experience. By sharing our personal experiences and those of others we have heard about, we add additional value to our exchanges with others.

Promotional support. As we continue to build rapport, we naturally share with others the strengths of those whom we value. We raise our Networkding partners' awareness of others, and in doing so we better position them for opportunities that arise.

Wisdom support. Wisdom adds the elements of clarity, understanding, and spiritual awareness. Wisdom exchanges are filled with caring and compassion--a real desire to help others develop and achieve their life's purpose. There are a lot of things that make themselves clear only after you have seen them for a while, gaining a perspective not

achievable any other way. Networkers have the benefit of years of rich life experiences. Here, there is also active mentoring and coaching.

Transformational opportunities. Ongoing Networking exchanges evolve transformational opportunities. These opportunities are the result of continuous emotional, informational, knowledge, promotional, and wisdom support exchanges. Opportunities can be leads; referrals; new jobs; or business, personal, or professional. Networking exchanges at this level generate more and better opportunities. This process allows networkers to pick and choose from a wide variety of opportunities. It also allows networkers to direct their opportunities according to their passions and life stage. For a twenty-five-year-old, an opportunity to live and work overseas would be wonderful, yet not as welcome an opportunity for someone, say, in his or her thirties with young children. At some moment, transformational opportunities are created that could not happen before.

Community. This level of support results from a series of exchanges. There is a ripple effect that occurs as each Networking partner shares the benefits of various forms of support with others in his or her community, support that is potentially shared with others, and so on and so forth. As multiple Networking exchanges make a difference in the networker's life, they continue to make a difference in the lives of others.

Fulfillment. A deep, personal sense of satisfaction comes from finding your purpose, and then using that purpose to fulfill your destiny and create your legacy. Throughout the Networking process, networkers receive fulfillment from exchanges individually, and even greater satisfaction from the awareness that they are making a difference in the lives of others. Fulfillment is both internal (for example, self-satisfaction) and external (as with larger salaries or business opportunities).

Let's look at an example. Jean Nidetch, president of multimillion-dollar Weight Watchers International, created a successful dieting empire by actively engaging in each of these types of meaningful exchanges with friends and customers alike. Because Nidetch provided the emotional and informational support her customers needed to be successful in losing weight, her customers rewarded her with promotional support, leads, and referrals that resulted in tremendous sales and profits.

These types of support exchanges make it infinitely easier to develop opportunities with others. In networking, one or both networkers shy away from opportunity development because they feel that they're imposing or being imposed on. Networking frequently produces win-lose situations rather than win-win situations, and thus reluctance to explore opportunities. People know they're using others or being used.

When networking partners manage to work on an opportunity together, it is almost always a "directed" opportunity. In other words, one of the people directs the other based on what he or she wants to accomplish. Although Networking may also involve directed opportunities, the direction is based on mutual interest and intent. It also offers the possibility of free-flowing opportunities. As you begin to exchange information, ideas, and experiences with others in your circle, new needs and opportunities may begin to surface that lead to the development of these free-flowing opportunities. Your combined intention and attention shift to brainstorming answers collectively. Ultimately, this "circle brainstorming" offers actionable solutions and real opportunities.

How Do You Rate as a Networker?

Are you a networker? Some people naturally practice Networking, but most of us have to work at it. Networking has been the norm for a long time, and it has probably colored

your view of finding and maintaining relationships. Although you may believe in Networking principles, you may have difficulty putting those principles to work for you.

A Web site focusing on women's lifestyles titled *ivillage.com* conducted a survey about networking over the Internet. Eleven hundred women and men working in various industries were involved. Sixty-seven percent of those responding indicated that forming relationships and using those connections to get ahead were critical for their success. They also stated that they did not know how to leverage their relationships in meaningful ways. Still others were apprehensive about pursuing connections to develop opportunities--especially the one-sided networking type--or concerned that improperly using this strategy could mean professional or social suicide.

We've found that there is a great deal of confusion and concern about how to make and maintain connections. People are apprehensive not only about the actual process but how good they are at it. When we introduce Networking to people during workshops, lectures, and other forums, they're often not sure if they're pursuing relationships and opportunities in an intentional, values-driven way.

The Networking Quiz

So are you a networker, a networker, or neither? Take the Networking quiz shown in Exhibit 1.1 to discover what your Networking IQ really is and what it could become. This quiz is based on the beliefs, strategies, and behaviors of expert networkers from a variety of industries and professional disciplines. By completing it you will be able to compare your ideas and skills with those of the experts, giving you insight into how you might change your approach.

Answer each of the questions in this quiz. Indicate how often you practice the behaviors listed using numbers 1 to 5 as follows: (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) occasionally, (4) often, or (5) always. Total your score once you have completed the quiz. This is your Networking IQ. To know how you rank as a networker, compare your score with those shown at the end of the exercise. The section following the quiz will give you a better understanding of just what your score means.

Interpreting Your Networking IQ

If your score reveals you to be a novice or a networker, don't be alarmed. It's relatively rare to encounter a natural networker; these are learned rather than inherent behaviors. Still, if you want to lead a fulfilling, successful life in our interconnected world, you're going to need to move from simple networking to expert Networking. As the quiz suggests, expert networkers have mastered the exchange of all types of support and drive continuous opportunities through collaboration. To achieve this mastery, you must pass through four levels: novice, networker, strategic networker, and Networking expert. The how-tos of advancing through these levels are presented in later chapters, but the basic explanations for each level are discussed as follows.

Novice (Score: 20-44)

If you scored from 20 to 44 points on the quiz, you are an entry-level networker or novice. You are likely to have cultivated a baseline network of friends and family members. You may also participate in professional, political, or community organizations but are unlikely to play a leading role in the management of them or their major events. Perhaps you have thought about your intent and the goals necessary to achieve it. It may be that you've considered your goals, beliefs, and values and the need to find and form compatible relationships. What you haven't done is share these thoughts with others in ways that create meaningful opportunities.

You're reluctant to do so because you feel uncomfortable using connections to get what you want or engaging in traditional "meeting-and-greeting" behaviors. Fear of rejection or doubt that you have anything valuable to offer others may be keeping you in the novice category.

The good news is that you can probably turn at least some of your contacts into meaningful collaborative relationships. The opportunities and support that Networking offers is not as far away as you might think. As you'll discover, a relatively simple shift in attitude and behaviors will have you Networking in no time.

Networker (Score: 45-64)

You are a true networker, having scored 45 to 64 points on the quiz. You are likely to have expanded beyond your circle of family, friends, and colleagues to include individuals from industry associations and important local and community organizations. You recognize influential people--known as influencers--and make every effort to meet with them. You are likely to pass out cards and contact information to a broad array of potential influencers and to follow up with them. Consequently, you have a large card file or computerized directory of names and contacts.

Yet despite your ability to meet and greet, you are not generating the quality of relationships or the type of opportunities you are interested in pursuing. Part of the problem may be that all those names you've accumulated do not really represent relationships; those people may not remember you when you get around to calling them, or you may be fuzzy about who they are. Or you establish a superficial relationship, exchanging information and some support, but the trust and shared goals aren't there for opportunities to develop. By learning to focus your efforts on developing relationships that are based on valuable exchanges, you can begin to experience the naturally beneficial opportunities that Networking provides. Strategic Networker (Score: 65-84)
As a strategic networker with a score of 65 to 84 points, you have moved well beyond traditional networking and entered the realm of Networking. You now do the following:

- Target and qualify those with whom you spend your time based on your goals, values, and beliefs
- Share your intent with those in your circle and understand theirs
- Grow your important target contacts into meaningful relationships
- Exchange different types of support with others
- Schedule meetings and regularly follow up with referral sources
- Leverage your relationships to develop opportunities for yourself and others

You are instinctively doing the right things. Now you will have the chance to broaden your Networking skills into a systematic approach for even greater success.

Networking Expert (Score: 85-100)

If you are a Networking expert, you are a top-level networker because you do this:

- Broaden your Networking circles to include divergent members--people who represent a broad spectrum of interests and skills and who provide you with access to more varied and significant opportunities
- Exchange support on all levels
- Acquire whatever resources you lack through others
- Interact with influential individuals who can help you reach your goals through mutually beneficial opportunities
- Engage in cross-level Networking to form personal strategic alliances, to

collaborate on projects, and to develop new opportunities with others

In the words of Zig Zigler, the highly successful salesman and motivational speaker, you are not only doing the right things but doing things right. You will now learn to refresh, refine, and further extend your Networking skills and processes to achieve even greater fulfillment.

Increasing Your Networking IQ

The four rating categories are provided to give you a sense of where you are on the relationship-building to opportunity-creating continuum; they are not absolutes. For instance, Networking experts can still improve their Networking ability. Networking novices can very quickly transition into Networking. Some strategic networkers are much further along in their development than others in the same grouping. In the following chapters, we're not going to dwell on these categories; we will only mention them as guideposts along the way. Your goal should not be to achieve expert status as much as to keep improving on the skills, behaviors, and mind-set that high-level Networking represents. Continuous improvement, therefore, is what we're going to stress.

People who continuously improve or move quickly along the continuum are those who visualize their network, establish connections with bridgers, create inner and outer circles to "hold" their Networking relationships, identify and include influencers, and maximize their connectivity. Let's examine each of these Networking facilitators and how they might help you become a networker.

Visualize Your Network

Your network is a series of organic connections between yourself, people with resources, and your opportunities. Two familiar images may serve to represent these connections: a bull's-eye with you at its center, with your relationships forming the surrounding concentric circles; and an orchestra that produces incredible music with you as the conductor. The best image, however, is a living organism. This is because Networking is an ongoing process of relationship building, exchange, and opportunity creation. Your network transforms and evolves with your intent and that of your network members. Collectively you give birth to many mutually beneficial opportunities as you move toward the achievement of your goals.

To form your own more personalized picture of a network, imagine yourself at the center of a dynamic, functioning organism. You are connected to many specialized cells that work together to accomplish the organism's various goals, like eating, breathing, and so on. These cells work collectively according to what appears to be an invisible directive. They are efficient and productive, and each cell benefits from the actions undertaken. As the organism grows, it changes form, learns new things, and gains new experiences. It adds, expels, and replaces cells. Each cell has a dynamic relationship to the whole, growing and expiring throughout the life of the organism. Finally, the organism combines with another organism to realize its greatest accomplishment: reproduction or the creation of a new life.

In your network, you are surrounded by cells--those in your primary, secondary, and tertiary relationship circles. Like specialized cells, each of these people serve unique functions. Some have tremendous influence and are regular, active partners with you; others lend occasional support. This is a dynamic rather than a static universe you've created. You're bringing in and moving out people continuously based on evolving goals.

Think about having access to this diverse group of people. Imagine a steady stream of

opportunities flowing by you and being able to access whatever resources you need to take advantage of these opportunities. Furthermore, visualize the people in this dynamic universe as being individuals you implicitly like, trust, and respect. They are not in the universe for the money or any other reason but because they are compatible with you on many levels.

If you can visualize yourself as part of this network--if this system strikes you as something that you want to create--then you're starting off on the right foot. You want to shift your frame of reference from a flat, static series of contacts to an evolving, multilevel group of connections. Just shifting your thinking about the types of relationships you can develop will help you see the Networking possibilities. If you have doubts about whether such a network is possible--especially if you're skeptical about your own ability to establish the right relationships--then consider this: you are closer to your future network partners than you think.

Establish Connections with Bridgers

In John Guare's play *Six Degrees of Separation*, Ouisa, one of the lead characters, explains the people-connection phenomenon as follows: "I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everybody else on this planet. The President of the United States. A gondolier in Venice. How every person is a new door, opening up into other worlds. Six degrees of separation between me and everyone else on this planet." (Guare, 1990, p. 81).

Indeed, noted scholars have studied the "people puzzle," or the random connections between individuals, since the 1960s. Yale sociologist Sam Milgram's study of a group of midwesterners' relationships to strangers on the East Coast and mathematicians Steven Strogatz and Duncan Watts's writings on the relationships between working actors all conclude that people can connect with any individual in only a few steps using well-placed intermediaries. We call these intermediaries bridgers. They are individuals who bring together people from different groups to develop new opportunities. Bridgers can be just about anyone, from well-placed people in organizations who connect across departmental boundaries to family members, neighbors, friends, and PTA members.

Because of the relationships bridgers have cultivated in different areas of their lives, they are invaluable resources in helping you connect with others to achieve your goals. Bridgers may not provide you directly with opportunities or even offer you support, but what they will do is link you to others who will become your Networking partners. They serve an important "middleman" function because both you and the person they help you link up with trust the bridger. This trust makes it easier to explore and establish a relationship with a stranger.

For example, Jose, a local entrepreneur, is an extraordinary bridger. He knows people from large and small businesses, community organizations, and government agencies. Jose often connects people from his various groups, and these connections catalyze opportunities. He has a matchmaker's instinct, an ability to see many of the compatible qualities we've discussed. Jose benefits in many ways from the connections he helps establish; he receives a great deal of return business from the grateful friends and associates he brings together. Though he may not be in the network proper, he exists on its periphery and serves a valuable function.

If you can find bridgers in your personal and professional life, they can quickly eliminate whatever degrees of separation exist between you and the people who will make tremendous Networking partners. Bridgers are easily identifiable; they're the ones who

seem to know everyone, have a knack for anticipating who will work well together, and relish the chance to make the introductions.

Create Inner and Outer Circles

As we've already suggested, you will need different circles of people surrounding you in your network. This is because all relationships are not the same, and networkers learn that if they organize their relationships according to type (frequency of contact, level of exchange, type of opportunities developed, and so on), they can enjoy much more productive relationships. Networkers tend to have disorganized, undifferentiated relationships, and this prevents them from focusing their energy on the right people at the right time.

Organizing and differentiating for networkers means dividing relationships into primary, secondary, and tertiary circles, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. The primary circle is made up of people with whom you have frequent contact and exchanges of support, and they're the ones who are most closely aligned with your goals and values. This primary group usually consists of three to ten influential individuals with whom you develop opportunities. In this primary circle, the relationships are proactive. People know each other well and share beliefs and objectives, enabling them to anticipate the needs of others in the circle. This means that you're not always calling someone for help, but there is a balance of asking for and giving help.

Jackie is a member of Leon's primary circle. After working closely with Leon, a marketing manager in his mid-thirties who has an engineering background, Jackie was truly impressed with his motivation and talent. Because she knew that Leon wanted to be a general manager, she recommended him for operating assignments both inside and outside of her company. As a result of her recommendations, he received an opportunity to manage an international joint venture and later to manage a large, growing telecommunications operation. In turn, Jackie received admiration and gratitude from both Leon and his employer. As his influence grew, Leon reciprocated by referring Jackie to the president of his company to fill a senior management role that he knew she would be interested in and qualified to do. In addition, Jackie and Leon are working on an idea for a new business that represents a mutual opportunity.

Invariably, the interactions between people in primary circles lead to supplementary relationships. Through the inner circle of your network, you meet people who form the outer or secondary and tertiary circles. Usually, someone in your primary circle refers you to an individual who becomes part of your outer circles. For example, the president of Leon's company became part of Jackie's secondary circle. Your secondary circle can be several times the size of your primary one because the need for regular contact and support isn't as great. Therefore, you don't have to expend the same amount of time and emotional energy as you do in your primary circle.

Secondary circles are valuable because they help you develop greater information, broader perspectives, and enhanced influence. In most instances, secondary circles are more diverse than primary ones and can provide a greater range of ideas, information, and referrals. Tertiary circles are formed from the "spillover" from secondary circles. The tertiary circles consist of the individuals you see the least often but who can deliver--if infrequently--useful facts, ideas, and other types of support.

The bonds that you form with people in these various circles hold them together. It is unrealistic to expect that you'll have equally strong bonds with each person in each circle. Nor is that necessary. Weak bonds may be fine, especially if your relationship with someone in a tertiary circle is built on an information exchange. As much as

possible, however, you should strive to transition weak bonds into stronger ones. By doing so, you increase the chances of having successful Networking relationships and opportunities. Bonds built on trust produce the most valuable and sensitive insights, information, and opportunities. After all, you are likely to invite someone to participate with you in a great business opportunity only if you trust and respect the person.

Because it's impossible to form strong bonds with everyone, you should concentrate on forming your strongest bonds with people in your primary circle; they're the ones with whom you have the most in common and the most contact. Beyond that, focus on creating exceptionally deep and meaningful relationships with the people we refer to as influencers.

Identify and Include Influencers

In the old business scenario, influential individuals used to be called the "powerful" people. Using power, however, is no longer the way things get done in our world. Too often, powerful people make things happen in the short term at the expense of long-term results, and they alienate so many people that they lose others' loyalty, enthusiasm, and initiative.

Influencers, in contrast, may have "position power" based on their titles or jobs but they don't issue orders to get things done. Instead, they use their knowledge, skills, experience, reputation, resources, and connections to make things happen. Although influencers might be CEOs or people who occupy high-level positions, they may also be just about anyone--opinion-making journalists, trend-setting industry leaders, community activists, inventors, and so on. It all depends on what your goals are and if a given individual is able to influence others to help you achieve these goals.

Consider Jim, who had the good fortune of finding a great influencer during a sales call. After striking up a conversation with the receptionist at one of his customers, Jim asked her who she knew well at the company. The receptionist surprised Jim by saying that she was close with the CEO because she and her husband often went antiques shopping with the CEO and her husband. Jim's decision to create a strong bond with this receptionist wasn't mercenary. He didn't particularly want her to put in a good word with the CEO or intervene on his behalf in any way. But after talking with her, Jim realized that she knew more about the business than anyone he had ever met. It was no wonder that she was friendly with the CEO as well as a number of other people in the industry. Her insights into customer service problems were incredibly perceptive, and she was well aware of the techniques being used to try and solve these problems. This receptionist was an unlikely influencer because of her job, but she was an influencer nonetheless. She shared her insights with Jim, and he was able to develop a program that eventually brought him an enormous amount of business.

Influencers are often natural networkers, if not in name then in deed. They are well known and often well respected in their sphere of influence (this receptionist had the respect of everyone, and the company's top executives frequently shared ideas with her). They often support or mentor others.

Christine is an influencer who built her career as a successful consultant for Fortune 500 firms. Recently, she had a rare opportunity to establish an office in Europe. She located her office in London and joined the city's chamber of commerce. She worked on several chamber committees focused on policy issues, volunteering her consulting services to support the efforts of small businesses in London. Because of her genuine concern and efforts for small businesses and chamber policies, Christine grew both her influence and her network in the London business community. And it paid off for her when she was

elected as the first woman chair of London's chamber of commerce.

Maximize Your Connectivity

We would be remiss if we failed to discuss electronic communications as a Networlding facilitator. There is still no substitute for connecting in person to build rapport or establish an emotional link. In the most recent DDB Needham lifestyle study, the percentages for going out and interacting with others at movies, sporting events, and casinos increased 10 percent to 19 percent over the same activities in 1988. In a Roper study, face-to-face financial transactions were seen to be preferred three to eight times over telephone or on-line transactions.

But ironically, it is becoming more difficult for us to connect and have effective personal and social interactions. Growing time pressures mean we participate less in clubs, community projects, and entertaining in our homes. Some of us even believe that we are losing our ability to talk and socialize effectively with others (DDB Needham Emotional Needs Study).

Given this situation, we've found that electronic communications can enhance our ability to connect with others. Networlders rely on e-mail and the Internet as both relationship-building and maintenance tools. Although they should not be a substitute for face-to-face encounters, they are a valuable supplement. Networlders often target specific user groups. They use a variety of sources to identify the individuals with whom to connect, including on-line mailing lists, Web sites, news groups, and more. Networlders use e-mail and Internet to exchange all types of information, ideas, and even emotional support. People can initiate relationships in chat rooms that blossom into "real world" partnerships; an electronic exchange can lead to a face-to-face meeting. Conversely, relationships that begin in the real world can deepen through electronic dialogues.

Electronic communication often accelerates relationship-building for many networlders, moving them quickly through the following four relationship stages: lack of awareness (that is, they are complete strangers); awareness (knowledge of the other is one-sided); mutual awareness (two parties have knowledge of each other but have not met); and contact or acquaintance (two parties meet or exchange e-mail). Sociologist Linton Freeman analyzed the impact of electronic communication on relationship building. Measuring the degree and speed of social scientists moving through the four stages of building relationships, he found that none of the control group, which did not have e-mail or conferencing tools, moved through all four stages within the seven-month study period. In contrast, over 30 percent of the group with electronic communications tools moved into the third phase of mutual awareness quickly and none in this group remained in the first phase by the end of the study. Indeed, Valdis Krebs, a consultant on social networks and organizational behavior, concludes that on-line connectivity may provide social networks that are an order of magnitude larger and stronger than what we have commonly experienced.

So don't avoid electronic communication because you feel it is superficial or vastly inferior to personal communication. Like anything else, it can be misused or abused, and we wouldn't recommend spending all or most of your time on Internet relationships. However, you should explore different Web sites, news groups, user groups, and knowledge circles, initiating relationships and strengthening existing ones. For example, Six Degrees, located at www.sixdegrees.com, is one of the foremost connection Web sites. Six Degrees enables users to connect with thousands of individuals who have interests similar to theirs. Similarly, Participate.com supports the development of premier knowledge circles in companies and across industries. There is even a networlding.com Web site to provide ongoing information, opportunities, and connections among socially

conscious networkers.

Now That You Know What Networking Is, What Should You Do?

The actual practice of Networking may seem intimidating. After all, it's one thing to work a room, it's something else entirely to establish primary circles, identify influencers, and build mutually rewarding relationships that lead to opportunities. We want to assure you, however, that Networking is something that anyone can do. Although it requires a bit of thought and effort, people gain proficiency at it relatively quickly.

One of the things that will help you get started is knowing the rules. Unlike networking, there is a science as well as an art to this relationship-building and opportunity-creating process. In the next chapter, we will look at the specific rules that will govern your Networking behaviors, help you meet the people who you need to meet, and create your opportunities.