

Finding and Landing Clients

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ICE BREAKER

Outline

- 2 key concepts of the course, this module
- The importance of your network
- How to analyze your network
- How to grow your network
- Who is your ideal client?
- On the subject of online freelancing platforms, cold calls/emails
- DISCUSSION

Caveat Emptor:

I am not a lawyer or
an accountant

TWO KEY CONCEPTS FOR THIS COURSE

1. Working for yourself is the one way to guarantee (or minimize the probability) that you will not be laid off
2. Setting up a solopreneur business is easy and landing your first client is easier than getting your next job

TWO KEY CONCEPTS FOR THIS MODULE

1. Your first client will come from within your network. 90%+ of your subsequent clients will as well. So establishing and growing your network in your field is CRITICAL.
2. Using your network effectively is about identifying the key nodes within in and establishing regular, in-depth conversations with them.

The importance of your network

My story: my first 5 clients

- **Client 1:** CEO of a startup, took my online classes with Neo4j and had linked with me on LinkedIn
- **Client 2:** CEO of a startup, someone I had worked with 20 years ago and our paths crossed a few times over the years with his various companies
- **Client 3:** CEO of a private company, someone I had worked with 15 years ago and we have just stayed in touch
- **Client 4:** Director of a defense contractor, someone who worked on the same grant as me 12 years ago
- **Client 5:** VP of a public company, a referral from someone working at Client 3's company

Some truths about getting clients

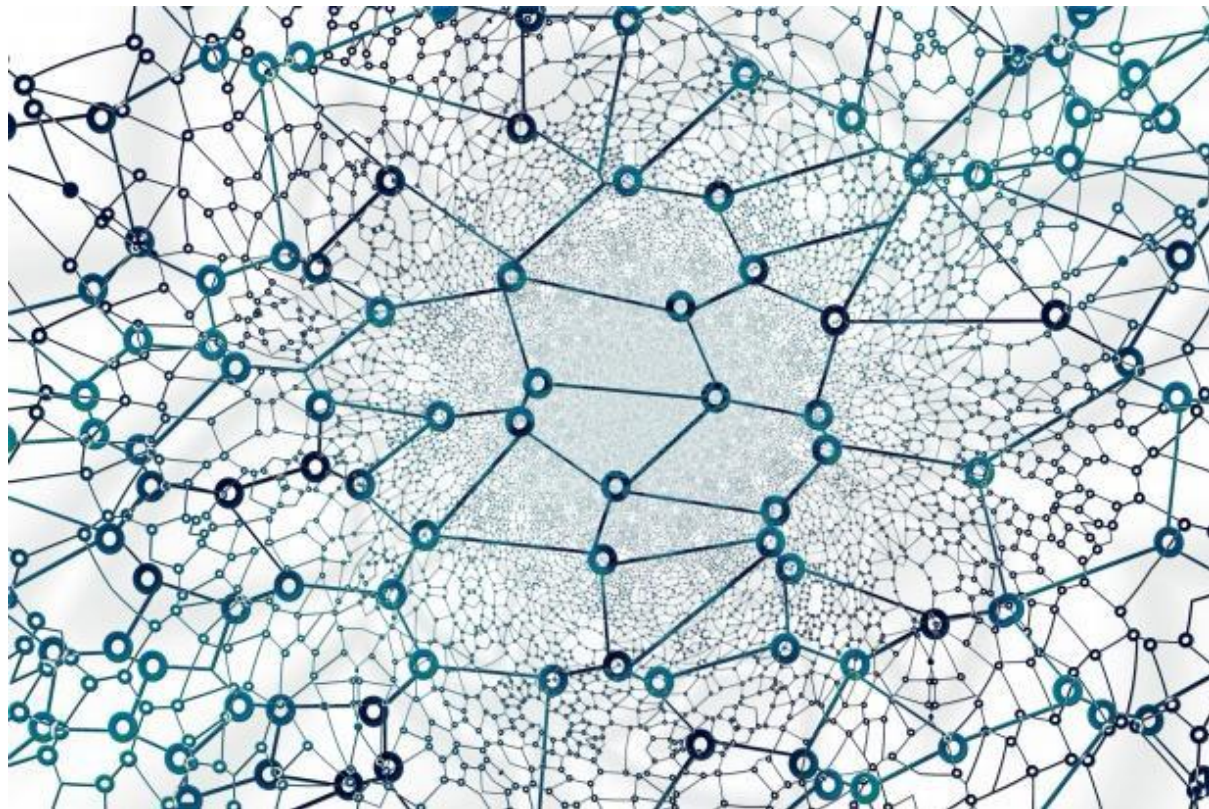
- Your first client will come from within your existing network
- So will your second
- And probably your third
- ...
- Good networks include:
 - People you have worked with in the past
 - Other people in your field who know of your experience, skills, and interests
 - People who work for companies that have problems that you can solve
 - Other solopreneurs!
- Even as you grow, 90%+ of your clients will come from within your network

The importance of other solopreneurs in your network

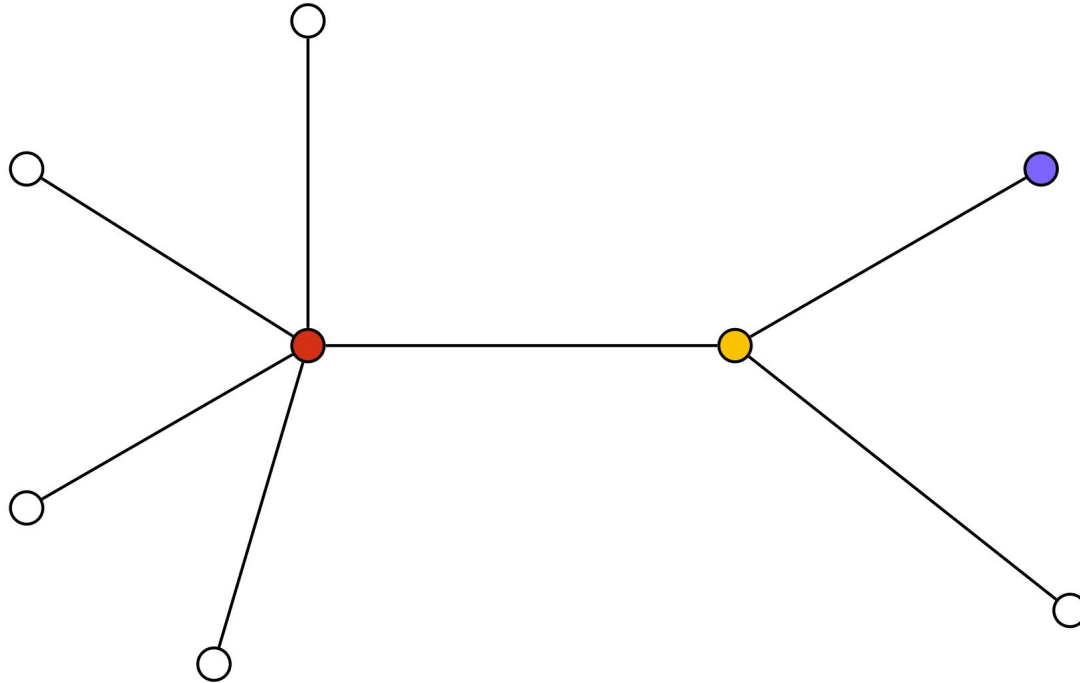
- Other solopreneurs are NOT your competition - they are your colleagues!
- You gain **credibility** with potential clients when you can refer them to other solopreneurs
- Word-of-mouth marketing is *incredibly* important and effective!

How to analyze your network

What do we mean by a network?

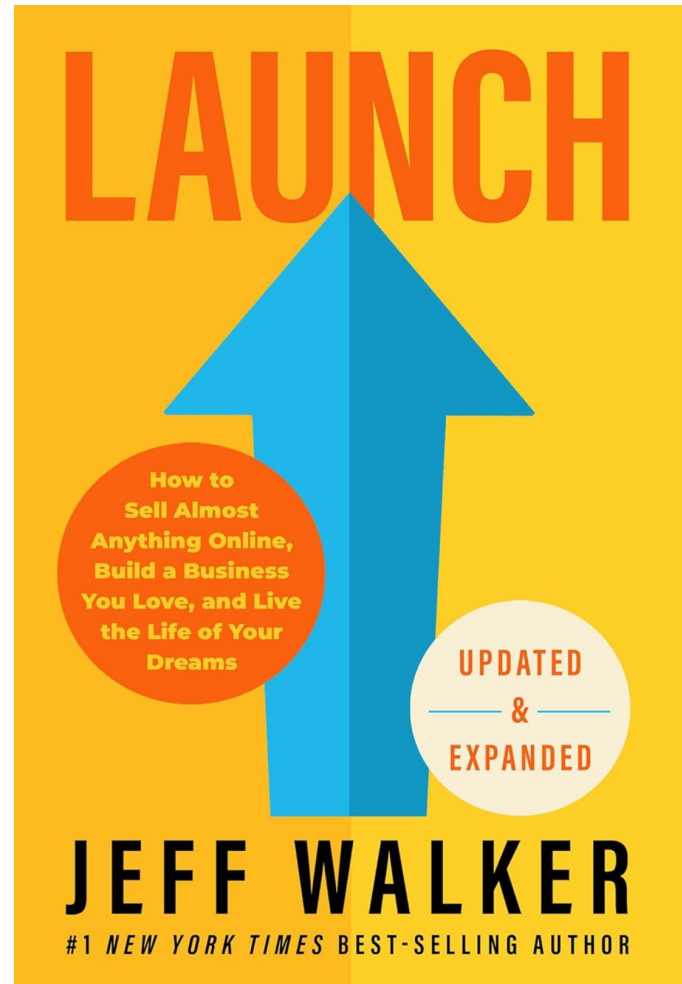


Not all nodes in a network are created equal



Where is your network?

- In person?
- Phone?
- Email?
- Social media?
- YouTube?
- Slack / Discord?



Seeking out the influential nodes in your network

- They know a lot of people
- More importantly, the people they know are high quality connections
- They are vocal advocates who know your work and are willing to connect you with others
- They know people who are looking for help who could contract with you
- They have serious skills
 - Credibility

EXERCISE:

Think about your network. Who are the 2-3 most influential nodes?

How to grow your network

CREDIBILITY

DEFINITION

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and reliability of a source or individual based on their track record, expertise, and transparency. It is a measure of how believable and authentic information or a person appears to others. Establishing credibility often requires consistent honesty, accuracy, and expertise over time.

EXAMPLES

- **Certified Professionals:** Individuals who have undergone rigorous training and examination to prove their expertise in a particular field
- **Eyewitness Testimony:** A firsthand account given by individuals who directly observed an event, providing valuable insights and details about the occurrence.

Credibility must be...

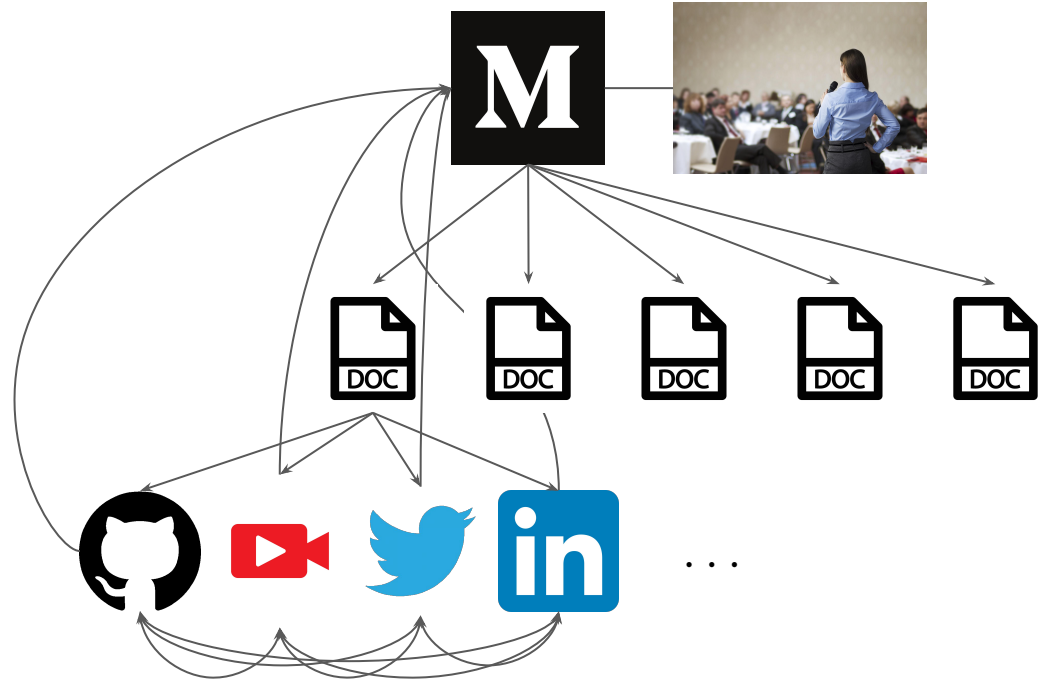
- Public
- Searchable
- Measurable / demonstrable
- Verifiable

Using credibility to enhance your position in the network

- Credibility acts as social proof that amplifies your position in the network
- Quality signals travel through networks faster than weak signals
- Credibility transforms you from a peripheral node to a connector node
 - As people recognize your expertise, they naturally connect with you
 - “I know the person who wrote this article”
- Public demonstrations of expertise create better PageRank
- Credibility becomes searchable and discoverable

Establishing credibility: “The Content Flywheel”

Goal: take one substantial bit of content, break it into microcontent, and cover as much surface area with it as possible



A note on conferences

- Great for networking, especially if you are establishing your credibility at them
 - Speaking
 - Volunteering
- A great way to keep your skills current, continuing education
- What conferences teach X?
- What conferences do Y attend?
- An investment in you!
- Tax deductible! (Caveat Emptor)

Considerations when you are keeping your intent to go solo private

- Only talk with those influential nodes within your network
- When publicly working to establish credibility, try and do it relative to your current work
- Consider starting as a side hustle with a single client rather than a full-in approach

EXERCISE:

If you do “X for Y,” brainstorm 3-5 large content items that could demonstrate your expertise in X, targeting Y, that you could create RIGHT NOW?

Who is your ideal
client?

Important things to consider before identifying

- Consider the “I do X for Y” niche
- Company maturity
 - Pre-funding startup
 - Series ____ startup
 - Public
- Company size
- What the company works on
- Public versus private
- Have they recently had layoffs?

Identifying the problems they have to solve

- Talk with decision makers
- What keeps them up at night?
- Take away a pain or provide a pleasure?
 - One tends to be more common for solopreneurs than the other
- Don't tell them what their problems are
 - ...even if you know they are wrong
 - Guide them to it
- Offer to solve the *problems they identify* for them
 - During the solving process is when you guide them to what the real problems are
 - Results in repeat / continued business!

EXERCISE:

The “Past Success”
analysis

How to do the “Past Success” analysis

1. Identify 3-5 projects or work experiences where you felt the most energized and competent
2. For each of the above identify:
 - a. What type of person or organization did you help?
 - b. What specific problem did you solve?
 - c. What made the collaboration satisfying?
3. Explore what patterns have emerged from the above
4. Who in the market, your niche, and/or your network fits the above?

Create a specific plan to get in front of leaders (director-level and above) of these companies!

MY STORY:

The importance of
client diversity

DISCUSSION:

Describe your ideal
client

Keeping track of them: Customer Relationship Manager (CRM)

- Centralizes data on all customer interactions in one place
 - Contact information
 - Interactions
 - Purchases/contracts
- Manages leads, tracks sales pipelines, automates follow-ups



All Contacts

Navigation

- Simple CRM Dashboard
- Client Funnel
- Prospects
- Current Clients
- All Contacts
- Archive

Resources

-  Sales Funnel Templates
-  Example Projects Data...
-  Meetings

Show All						
Aa Company	Contact	Status	Industry	Contact info	Next action date	Next action
Smith Web Design	John Smith	Lead	Tech	j.smith@company2.net	March 14, 2024	pitch
Jane Doe & Co.	Jane Doe	Negotiating	Real estate	j.doe@company1.org	February 23, 2024	Discover call you
Midtown Property Solutions	Susan Harris	Current client	Real estate	s.harris@midtownproperty.		Ongoing
Nelson & Murdock	Karen Page	Current client	Law	k.page@mmlaw.com		Ongoing
Stark Industries	Pepper Potts	Past client	Tech	p.potts@iamironman.net		N/A
Zapier						
+ New						

On the subject of
online freelancing
platforms, cold calls

Online freelancing platforms

- There are many options
 - Upwork
 - Fiverr
 - Toptal
 - etc...
- Landing work here involves lots of tricks that successful freelancers on the platform rarely share
- A race to the bottom
- Tons of “shady” interactions
- Useful for finding help on one-time jobs, specific tasks
 - Tax deductible



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Jobs you might like

Best Matches Most Recent U.S. Only Saved Jobs (2)

Browse jobs that match your experience to a client's hiring preferences. Ordered by most relevant.

Posted 3 hours ago

Datascientist to help evaluate for industrial analysis platform

Hourly: \$15-\$50 - Intermediate - Est. Time: Less than 1 month, Less than 30 hrs/week

We are building an analysis platform for certain kinds of industrial equipment which tracks both operational data as well as economic and climate data. We want an external consultation on our implementation and calculation.

Operations Analytics Data Analysis Consultation Data Analysis

Payment verified

★★★★★

\$30K+ spent

Norway

Proposals: 20 to 50

Posted 3 hours ago

Seeking AI Expert for Podcast Episode

Hourly: \$50-\$150 - Expert - Est. Time: Less than 1 month, Less than 30 hrs/week

I'm seeking an AI expert to join a new software podcast for the first ever episode. The host is also a senior software developer. The episode will be conducted over Zoom, and will be published on YouTube as audio-only. No need to use your full name if you don't want to. The format of the podcast is informal. It should also be informative, and at times delve deep into technical...

[more](#)

LangChain AI Agent Development

Payment verified

★★★★★

\$40K+ spent

United States

Proposals: 15 to 20

Featured

Posted yesterday

AI Training Data Researcher with RLHF & Preference Learning Focus

Hourly: \$25-\$40 - Intermediate - Est. Time: 1 to 3 months, Less than 30 hrs/week

AI Training Data Researcher (PhD/Master's Student) — RLHF & Preference Learning Focus Project Type: Ongoing research support (5-10 hours/week) Duration: 3+ months with potential for extension Rate: \$25-40/hour (based on experience and expertise) Requirements: Must be AI fluent — deep understanding of modern training pipelines required About Us We're a...

[more](#)

Data Analysis Machine Learning Data Science Artificial Intelligence Topic Research

Payment verified

★★★★★

\$10K+ spent

United States

Proposals: 10 to 15

Posted 2 hours ago

AI Full Stack Engineer Needed for AI Website Builder



Hourly: \$70-\$100 - Expert - Est. Time: 1 to 3 months, not_sure

📍 Only freelancers located in the United States may apply.

Independent freelancers only. ***No agencies***, please. We are looking for a full stack AI engineer to help us build "Lovable" for financial advisors. The Role, click here to view the description easier: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d7HvaJgO8rBqt-2d6eCzLk2Jm8DO0jLFRNMwMtaFBo0/edit?usp=sharing> We're looking for a strong full-stack engineer with excellent frontend... [more](#)

TypeScript

Vercel

Web Application

JavaScript

React

Artificial Intelligence

Node.js

Supabase



Payment verified



\$30K+ spent



United States

Proposals: 50+

Posted yesterday

Organic Search Rank - AI / GPT Models



Hourly: \$65-\$128 - Expert - Est. Time: 1 to 3 months, 30+ hrs/week

📍 Only freelancers located in the United States may apply.

Description: We are seeking an experienced AI Search / LLM Optimization specialist to help position the one of our APIs as the authoritative solution in the small niche we operate within AI-generated answers across major models (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity). The objective is organic visibility and citation, not paid placement—ensuring that when AI systems answer...

[more](#)

Search Engine

AI search

Machine Learning

LLM Prompt

LLM Prompt Engineering



Payment verified



\$20K+ spent



United States

Proposals: 20 to 50

Results for logo design



Logo services
Find a logo designer



Logo maker
Customize pre-made logos

Category ▾

Logo options ▾

Seller details ▾

Budget ▾

Delivery time ▾

☐ Pro services

180,000+ results

Hourly rates filter **New**

See services by freelancers who offer hourly rates.

Got it

Sort by: **Relevance** ▾



Explore the world
Customers keep coming back



Martina D Ad

Top Rated ⬢⬢⬢

I will create a professional minimalist business logo design

★ 4.9 (1k+)

From \$25



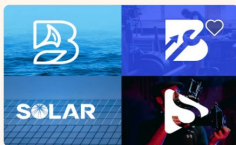
Saqib S. Ad

Level 2 ⬢⬢

I will create professional minimalist logo design for your business

★ 4.8 (1k+)

From \$30



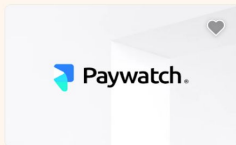
Khairul Islam Ad

Top Rated ⬢⬢⬢

I will design, redesign edit or update your existing business logo

★ 4.8 (77)

From \$85



Louis Key Ad

Vetted Pro

I will design a timeless logo

★ 4.8 (1k+)

From \$130

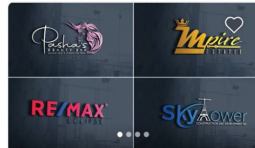


Saykat

Fiverr's Choice

I will design a minimalist business logo, branding kit, brand identity and brand...

★ 4.9 (220)



Lxbrandings

Level 2 ⬢⬢

I will design business logo design

★ 5.0 (74)



Rachel

Top Rated ⬢⬢⬢

I will create a professional minimalist logo design

★ 4.9 (1k+)



Ahmer Ali

Top Rated ⬢⬢⬢

I will do modern minimalist professional logo design

★ 4.9 (1k+)

TWO KEY CONCEPTS FOR THIS MODULE

1. Your first client will come from within your network. 90%+ of your subsequent clients will as well. So establishing and growing your network in your field is CRITICAL.
2. Using your network effectively is about identifying the key nodes within in and establishing regular, in-depth conversations with them.

Optional capstone project

- Identify your registered agent
 - Could be you
- Pick a company name
- Register with your state by submitting the Articles of Organization (assuming an LLC)
- Create an EIN number for your business
 - <https://sa.www4.irs.gov/applyein/>
- Open a business banking account (optional for the assignment but *STRONGLY* recommended for running your business!)

To do list

- Identify the influential nodes in your network and get time on their calendar
- Complete the “Past Success” analysis to identify your ideal customer, post in #general
- Create your Content Flywheel plan based on your identified ideal customer
- Schedule your 1:1 coaching session if you haven't already
- Prepare to launch your business!
 - Any volunteers for the final class to discuss their business?
 - Post your results in the assignment page on Maven

SURVEY QUESTIONS

DISCUSSION