

Why everyone needs a professional network

Build Your Professional Network

LECTURE
SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

What benefits can a network bring

- ▶ Before starting to build your professional network, you have to figure out what your goal is or what do you hope to gain by connecting with certain people
- ▶ Many times, getting job opportunities is not about how great you are, but about who you know
- ▶ If you have a network of people who you know and trust, you could use their connections, advice, and experience to your own professional advantage
- The more people you meet, the broader your experience will become
- The more people you know, the more opportunities you'll find
- The more people who follow you, the more influence you'll have
- ▶ A professional network can provide safety and security, whether you need help, feedback, or a new job

Building your first relationships

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SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

The first people you'll meet at work

- ▶ One of the first people you'll interact with is your new boss
- ▶ Every boss has a unique personality. Figuring out what motivates them will help you understand how to communicate with them
- Questions to ask your boss:
 - What are your expectations for me in the first week or first month?
 - What specific tasks or projects would you like me to focus on first?
 - When will my performance be evaluated, and how?
 - What are your expectations for the team?
 - What are our biggest obstacles?
 - What's the best way for me to help right now?
 - What are the other teams or departments like?

- ▶ The other people you'll interact with are your coworkers on your team
- ▶ They are the easiest to connect with because you're all in the same place, facing the same challenges
- Questions to ask your coworkers:
 - How are things going with the company?
 - How do you like our boss?
 - What happened to the last person who had my job?
- ▶ Other people you might meet:
 - human resources employees
 - leaders or executives
- Beware of people who badmouth others and take time to form your own opinions

How to talk to people at work

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Covered in this lecture:

Best practices for communication

- Conversations are one of the easiest ways to make connections with the people you meet
- The first time you meet someone, be polite, make eye contact, and smile. Use their name so you can easily remember it later
- ▶ If you need something, be respectful when asking the other person. Be clear about what you need and thank them
- ▶ If someone needs something from you, ask questions to make sure you understand what they need, be helpful, and do your job well
- ▶ If you need help with a problem, explain it clearly and quickly, ask for advice instead of forcing solutions, listen to their suggestions, and thank them for their help
- ▶ If you're asked to give feedback to someone, don't be afraid to pay compliments, but stay objective and offer constructive feedback
- Making your conversations and interactions positive and productive will ensure people will want to talk to you again

Developing your people skills

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Interpersonal skills you need to develop

- ▶ In order to interact with people in positive ways, you need to develop some interpersonal skills

- **#1 Verbal skills**

- grammar basics
- clear and easy to understand voice
- sense of humor (and knowing when NOT to make jokes)
- icebreaker questions
- storytelling

- **#2 Non-verbal skills**

- smile is very effective at making others feel comfortable
- polite gestures like shaking someone's hand when you meet them

- **#3 Listening**

- process what others are saying
- approach conversations as a way to gather valuable information and gain new perspectives

● **#4 Empathy**

- show understanding toward other people's feelings and opinions
- congratulate people on success and cheer them up when they fail

● **#5 Persuasion**

- convince other people why you should get something you need

● **#6 Assertiveness**

- take the first step to ask a question or introduce yourself to someone

Building relationships outside your company

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Covered in this lecture:

Expanding your network further

- ▶ If you want to grow your network, you will have to look outside of your company as well, where you might interact with:
 - **#1 Customers and clients**
 - always remember that you are representing your company, so be on your best behavior
 - the more you interact with customers, the better you'll understand their needs and preferences
 - if you build a relationship with them, they will become loyal to the company
 - **#2 Vendors and contractors**
 - use clear communication to ensure work gets done accurately and on time
 - if some of these people are especially talented, they can be helpful sources of information and advice on related tools you might use
 - make note of people who do great work so you can remember them for future projects, and offer to connect with them on platforms like LinkedIn

● **#3 Industry contacts**

- at events or workshops, you can meet people in similar jobs or roles, which will make it easier to start a conversation
- get introduced to VIPs, experts, and influencers
- with each person you meet and connect with, you could gain knowledge as well as access to future opportunities

● **#4 Former colleagues**

● **#5 Friends and family who are also professionals**

- the advantage is that you already know these people, so connecting with them on LinkedIn makes perfect sense

Do more with your team

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How to raise your profile

- ▶ As you gain more experience, you'll realize that in order to gain new opportunities or rise in the ranks, you'll need to raise your professional profile
- **Raising your profile is all about improving your standing with most influential contacts you've got**
- ▶ You might want promotions, raises, more responsibilities, and more of a say in the direction of the company or team. What you should do:
 - **#1 Speak up in meetings**
 - participate and give feedback
 - come prepared
 - volunteer to lead the meeting
 - **#2 Offer help**
 - use your skills and show that you care about your team
 - show that you're ready for new responsibilities
 - mentor new hires
 - volunteer to work on a side project
- ▶ Always make sure you satisfy your own work responsibilities before taking on more

Attend company events and socials

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Types of events and what to do there

- ▶ Attending events gets your face seen outside your team or department
- **Here are some types of events you could attend:**
 - #1 Training and continuing education sessions
 - #2 “Brown-bag” lunches (educational meetings during lunch time)
 - #3 Talks with outside speakers
 - #4 Charity events
 - #5 Social events like beer after work or having a company sports team
 - #6 Annual parties
- ▶ If you’ve been given a responsibility at the event, make sure you do your job but also have fun
- ▶ Introduce yourself to important or interesting people if you see an opportunity

- **Conversational best practices:**

- use small talk to break the ice, show interest in them
- with coworkers, ask about the company
- avoid talking about politics, religion, or telling possibly offensive jokes

- Always be on your best behavior and don't drink too much

- ▶ You don't have to be at every event, but you have to find a balance in order to feel comfortable and at the same time make yourself noticed

Taking a leadership role

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Covered in this lecture:

How to be a good manager

- ▶ Once you raise your profile, you might be offered a leadership role, like:
 - managing a team of colleagues
 - managing contractors and freelancers
 - managing a project
- As a manager, you need to understand the work that your team is doing, as well as their struggles and challenges, but you also need to compel your team to get results
- Communication is key to being a great manager
- ▶ If you see an opportunity to lead a project or team, talk to your boss about it, explain your ideas, and tell him why you want to take on more responsibility
- ▶ Reassure them you'll still be committed to your regular job
- If you do take up a leadership position, share your progress regularly and be prepared to answer questions
- Don't be afraid to ask your network for help

Managing your LinkedIn profile

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Creating a professional LinkedIn profile

- ▶ LinkedIn is one of the best tools for networking that will allow you to expand your professional network
- ▶ **Keep in mind, you should focus on the quality of your contacts, not the quantity**
- ▶ To make your profile great, follow these best practices:
 - #1 Create a bio headline, where you put your current job title & your top interests
 - #2 Upload a nice professional head shot - don't use logos
 - #3 Add a nice profile header photo that compliments the page - you can use the company logo here, or a picture of your team at work or at an event
 - #4 Write short and focused job descriptions in the "Experience" section of your profile
 - #5 Add your skills, publications, education, and anything else as long as it's relevant information

- #6 Ask people for recommendations so they appear on your profile
 - you can ask the people you know best or the people you shared successful projects with
 - writing a recommendation for them first makes it more motivating for them to do the same for you
- #7 Keep your profile updated
- ▶ Always try to meet people first before connecting with them on LinkedIn

How to connect with the right people

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Covered in this lecture:

Making quality connections

- ▶ **A quality connection is someone you know through a job or professional interest who might be helpful to you in the future**
- ▶ Connecting might mean:
 - following them on social media
 - adding them on LinkedIn
 - - exchanging emails
 - meeting up for coffee
 - working on something together
- Not everyone is worthy of a connection. If you didn't like their work or attitude, don't stay connected
- ▶ Attending events will give you more chances to network, so this is what you can do to make it easier:
 - #1 Bring business cards
 - #2 Use the event app to connect with people you want to meet
 - #3 Record people's names and contact info
 - #4 The day after the event, send connection requests
 - #5 Include a short message with the requests so they remember you
 - #6 Don't go overboard with requests and messages, let your relationships grow before you ask for something

Following your industry

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Covered in this lecture:

Keeping up to date with trends

- ▶ To make expanding your network easier, you need to be up to date with your industry
- ▶ Here's how following your industry can benefit you:
 - You can do your job better by using the latest tools
 - You are prepared for changes like new products coming out or new ways of doing things
 - You'll find the best sources of information and expertise
 - You'll discover new people to reach out and connect with
- ▶ How to follow your industry:
- **#1 Social media**
 - LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, other industry specific platforms
 - follow or connect with people and groups who can help you develop your skills

- look for people who share helpful links, follow blogs, read news
- have detailed discussions on Quora and Reddit

● **#2 Online groups**

- on LinkedIn or Facebook, you can join groups for people with specific interests

● **#3 Attending events**

- bigger events provide access to bigger experts, giving you a chance to learn from industry luminaries, speakers, and executives
- smaller events provide a better chance to interact with everyone there

Developing your own influence

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LECTURE SUMMARY

Covered in this lecture:

Becoming someone that people look up to

- ▶ Influence is about getting your voice heard and people respecting what you say
- ▶ Depending on what goals you want to accomplish in the future, you might need the support of the people who follow you
- ▶ How to build your influence:
 - **#1 Treat people the way you hope to be treated**
 - be a team player
 - praise quality work
 - offer recommendations
 - share great stuff online
 - **#2 Establish your own expertise**
 - do quality work
 - participate in meetings
 - write about things you're passionate about

● #3 Engage with others

- respond to questions
- debate problems and ideas
- be honest
- show people respect

▶ If you do all these things, people will start trusting you and what you say

● At some point, you might need to ask for your followers' help

- be polite and thank them for their time
- make the task as easy to do as possible
- never put the people you influence in an awkward position - don't abuse your power

Wrapping up

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Conclusions

- ▶ Creating and expanding your network brings you new connections, new perspectives, new ideas, new opportunities, and it builds your influence
- ▶ Always start with the people you are closest to: your boss, coworkers, friends, and family
- ▶ Human beings will always need connections to feel like they're part of something worthwhile
- A professional network is a validation of the work you've done as well as a safety net for when you need help
- You are always at the center of your network and in complete control of who you connect with
- Keep your goals, your interests, and your priorities central in your mind to help you pick the right people