

Networking for Introverts

Build, Maintain, and Use Networks Without Being Creepy

Brian MacDonald
CodeMash 2024

Slides: <https://github.com/bmacdonald-editor/codemash2024>

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Personal story time



CONFIDENTIAL - DO NOT FORWARD: Your role at DigitalOcean [Effective Immediately]

work/DigitalOcean x



Yancey Spruill <yspruill@digitalocean.com>

Wed, Feb 15, 2023, 8:01 AM



to bcc: dl2 ▼

Today, we are announcing organizational changes at DigitalOcean that will have an impact on teammates, management, and leadership. **Unfortunately, your role is one that is directly affected and is being eliminated, effective today.** All decisions are final.

I recognize how personal and significant this news is for you. The PBP team and someone from your reporting line will be available to you for an optional discussion to walk through the details of what this means for you. As a reminder, our [EAP](#) is available if you'd like to speak with a confidential counselor.

Additionally, you will be receiving an email today to your personal email account with your separation package details along with an FAQ. We have done our very best to ensure you are well cared for during this challenging time. If you would like your details to be shared with external talent communities, please complete this [Google Form](#).

Access to the VPN, G Suite, and Slack are no longer in service.

Thank you for your contributions and all you've done to help grow DigitalOcean's business, culture, and values.


Yancey



Networks are great!

- For learning about industry trends
- For getting salary info
- For learning to solve problems
- For community
- And yes for job hunting





The best time to start building
your network is five years ago.
The second-best time is now.

Acknowledging privilege

Where we go wrong with networking

So why does it feel weird?

- Am I being deceptive?



So why does it feel weird?

- Am I being deceptive?
- Is it an even trade?



So why does it feel weird?

- Am I being deceptive?
- Is it an even trade?
- People are hard!



A network isn't a spreadsheet

My Network ☆ 📁 ☁

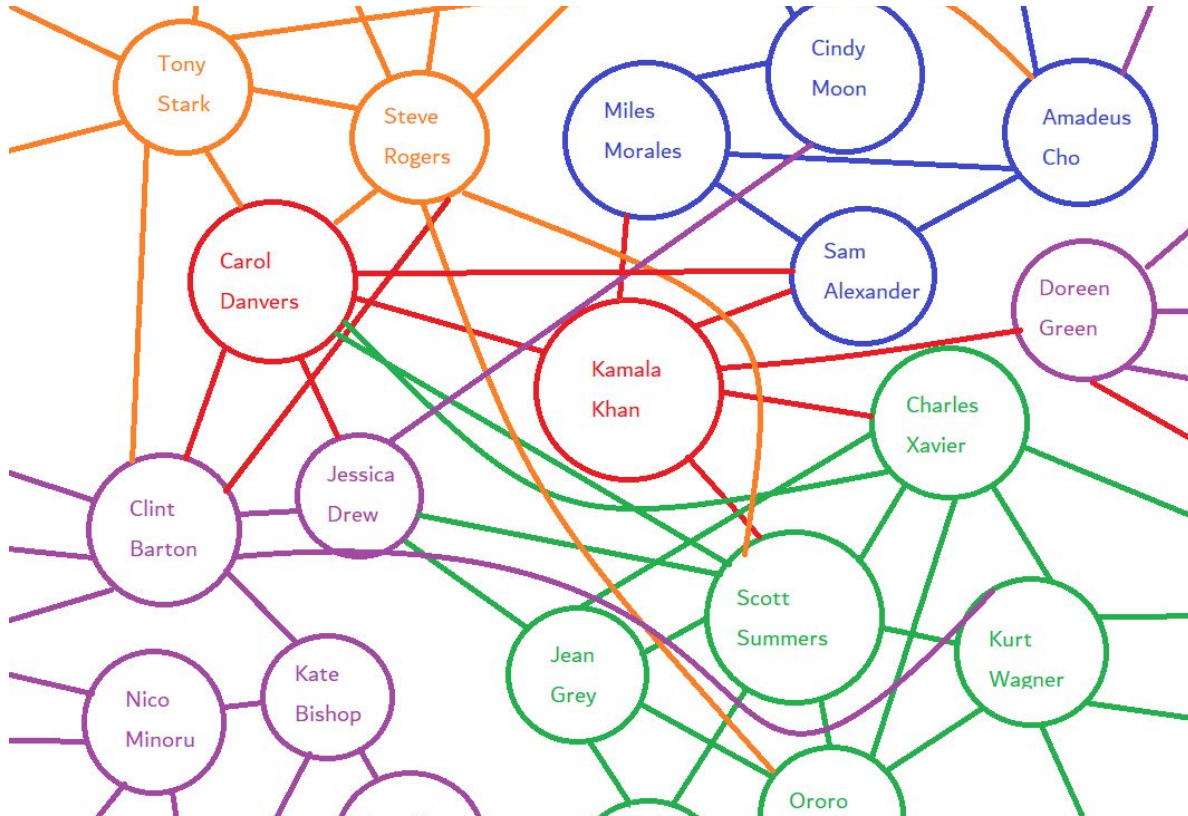
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help

100% 123 Default... 10 B I A

B16

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Job Factor	Name	Company	Met at	Date	Interaction	Notes
2	87	Scott Summers	RQ Optics	Local meetup	4/16/20	5/18/21 - Coffee	Intense; doesn't joke a lot
3	68	Doreen Green	Nuts.com	Chess club	7/18/23	8/22/23 - Mentoring	Fond of wildlife
4	52	Miles Morales	Oscorp	Biotech conference	2/12/21	9/27/22 - Zoom call	Has a mentor - get intro?
5	49	Monica Rambeau	Lockheed Martin	Sales call	5/14/19	3/21/23 - LinkedIn	Aerospace speciality
6	43	Rahne Sinclair	Wolfpack, Inc	Local meetup	11/9/22	1/16/23 - Meetup	Has good connections
7	37	Kamala Khan	Slothbaby.com	Local conference	6/1/23	8/5/23 - email	Early career
8	12	Cal Rankin	Xerox	LinkedIn outreach	10/20/18	no contact	Not sure if helpful

It's more like a web



Your network isn't just direct connections

- People you know



Your network isn't just direct connections

- People you know
- People they know
- People they work with
- People they've just heard of





You don't know where the next
opportunity is going to come from

The background is a solid pink color. In the top right corner, there is a geometric pattern consisting of several squares and triangles in different shades of pink and magenta, creating a modern, abstract design.

Change your mindset

Networks aren't (just) job-hunting tools

- Your network is a collection



Networks aren't (just) job-hunting tools

- Your network is a collection
- It's a collection of people



Networks aren't (just) job-hunting tools

- Your network is a collection
- It's a collection of people
- Joined together in one or more communities



Networks aren't (just) job-hunting tools

- Your network is a collection
- It's a collection of people
- Joined together in one or more communities
- You already have one, even if you don't know it





Networks are built on empathy

Building a network

How to people successfully

- Networking is getting to know people



How to people successfully

- Networking is getting to know people
- Specifically, knowing people *as people*



How to people successfully

- Networking is getting to know people
- Specifically, knowing people *as people*
- Everybody's got something to connect to



How to people successfully

- Networking is getting to know people
- Specifically, knowing people *as people*
- Everybody's got something to connect to
- Be willing to be a bit vulnerable




How to people successfully

- Networking is getting to know people
- Specifically, knowing people *as people*
- Everybody's got something to connect to
- Be willing to be a bit vulnerable
- Listen actively



EXERCISE

- 
1. Your Name
 2. Where you're from
 3. One weird interest
 4. Respond



This is not an exercise in networking.



This is not an exercise in networking.
It's an exercise in empathy.



Giving Back to Your Network

Listen first

- Don't just jump in with a suggestion



Listen first

- Don't just jump in with a suggestion
- Understand the needs you're addressing



Listen first

- Don't just jump in with a suggestion
- Understand the needs you're addressing
- Somebody else might be more appropriate



Share what you know

- When you reply, do so with empathy and intent



Share what you know

- When you reply, do so with empathy and intent
- Focus the reply on the person you're helping



Share what you know

- When you reply, do so with empathy and intent
- Focus the reply on the person you're helping
- Ask “Does this add to the discussion?”





Using your network

Be a participant

- Give others an opportunity to help



Be a participant

- Give others an opportunity to help
- Be willing to build community with empathy



Be a participant

- Give others an opportunity to help
- Be willing to build community with empathy
- Not every conversation has a purpose



When it's an emergency

- Be factual about what happened



When it's an emergency

- Be factual about what happened
- Be clear about what you need



When it's an emergency

- Be factual about what happened
- Be clear about what you need
- Be grateful for help, even if it's not helpful



Beyond the fire alarm

- Let people know how you're doing



Beyond the fire alarm

- Let people know how you're doing
- Express gratitude for the help again



Beyond the fire alarm

- Let people know how you're doing
- Express gratitude for the help again
- Pass along resources



Maintaining your network

Networks need maintenance



Don't wait for an emergency

- If your network has a persistent communication channel, participate



Don't wait for an emergency

- If your network has a persistent communication channel, participate
- Check in on people to keep things fresh



Don't wait for an emergency

- If your network has a persistent communication channel, participate
- Check in on people to keep things fresh
- Doesn't need a specific purpose



Wow, this is a lot of work

- People take effort



Wow, this is a lot of work


- People take effort
- Be mindful of your own resources



Wow, this is a lot of work

- People take effort
- Be mindful of your own resources
- You don't have to do everything





Taking your
network online

Beyond face-to-face

- Online communities are bigger than ever
 - Socials: Mastodon, BlueSky, Threads, even LinkedIn
 - Real-time convos: Discord, Slack, IRC
 - Asynchronous: Yes, forums still exist
- Beware parasocial relationships



Anonymity requires care

- Easy to lose nuance online
- Exercise empathy



Maintenance online

- Online communities multiply rapidly
- Don't feel obligated to keep all of them
- Checking in is easier, but so is ghosting



Final Thoughts

- Networks are built on empathy
- You already have the start of a network
- Opportunities come from unexpected places

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