How Leaders Create and Use Networks

Seth Marks
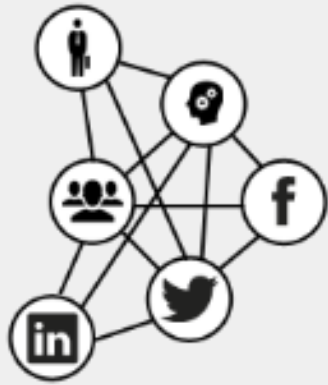
CCO, Creditinfo Solutions s.r.o.

NETWORKING

Creating a fabric of personal contacts who will provide support, feedback, insight, resources, and information

- Unfortunately one of the most dreadful development challenges aspiring leaders face
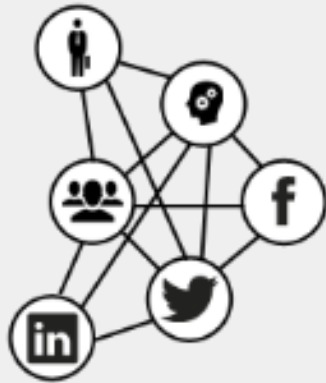- WHY?

Involves relational – not analytical – tasks

Failure to realize that interaction with diverse potential

stakeholders is not a 'distraction' from "real work"
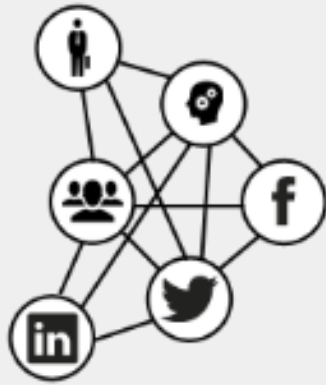
Mindset that networking is 'insincere or manipulative"

3 FORMS OF NETWORKING

Distinct but interdependent

3-pronged Networking Strategy key

I.   Operational

II.   Personal

III. Strategic

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OPERATIONAL

Purpose: to ensure coordination and cooperation among people who must know and trust each other in order to accomplish an immediate task(s)

- Either one is necessary to the task or not

Operational network includes:

- Direct reports
- Superiors
- Peers
- Key outside stakeholders

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OPERATIONAL cont...

Generally, Operational Networking comes most naturally – but there are 'blind spots'….

Big one = tendency to fall back on functional credentials

- E.g. example of company going public

Geared towards meeting assigned objectives, not strategic ones..

Quality of relationships – rapport and mutual trust – that gives an operational network its power
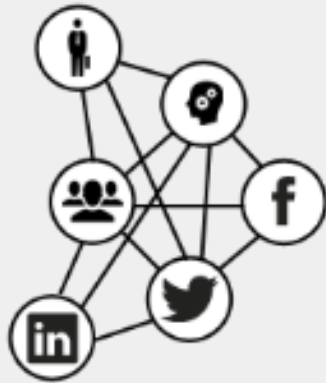
PERSONAL NETWORKING

Seeking "kindred spirits" outside of one's organization

Purpose: to gain new perspectives that allow them to advance in their careers

Common Mistake: Why spend time on an activity so 'indirectly' related to the tasks at hand??

- These contacts provide important referrals, information and often development support
- Personal development

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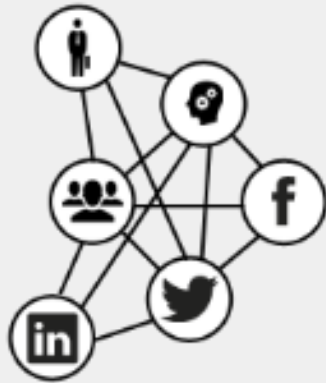
STRATEGIC NETWORKING

From Functional Manager to Business Leader

Purpose: connect the leader into a set of relationships and information sources to provide a platform to achieve organizational and personal goals

Difference between a leader and a manager?

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STRATEGIC NETWORKING cont...

Beware of dismissing things for being "political"

Absorbs a significant amount of time and energy – but don't drop it

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4. Mistakes to Avoid when Networking

Classic case: you are at a conference, you meet a big-hitter in your field, you are unprepared what to say when you meet, so you resort to: "Great to meet you, great work you are doing" – you hand him your business card and say "if you're ever in Prague, it'd be a pleasure to meet up."

- You never hear from him again....
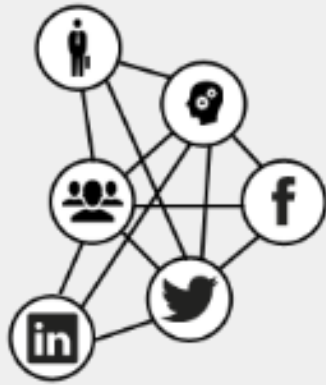
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1. Misunderstanding the pecking order

Peers: your similarity alone is enough for them to want to connect with you

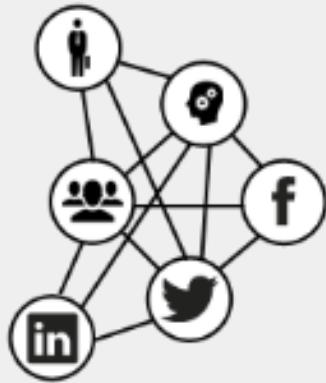Not the case with people "above" you in status

2. Asking to Receive before you Give

Offer them a benefit up-front

Eg: Google hangout
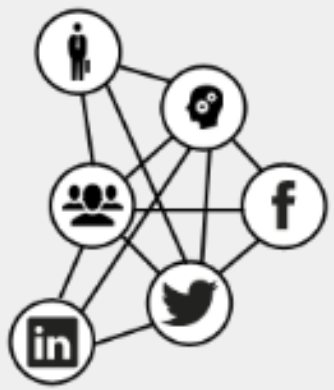
3. Failing to state your Value Proposition

You have to be very explicit, very quick about how you can help

Have a 30-second value proposition pitch

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4. Avoid De-Energizers

Research shows that 90% of work anxiety cause by 5% of one's network – the people who sap energy!

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Questions and Answers

Thank you