



Develop **quality networks** to extend your influence

The challenge

The ability to garner support for your initiatives depends notably on the density and the quality of your relationships with the various company stakeholders. A well-managed network will give you a broader base of support, greater personal legitimacy and increased access to resources. However, proactive and thoughtful effort must be devoted to cultivating and maintaining your networks over time.

Four recommendations to develop effective support networks



① Proactively develop your networks

Only a proactive effort can guarantee quality networks.

- **Seize every opportunity to form new connections.**
e.g.: Participate in many internal projects, even to make periodic contributions; regularly attend meetings and conferences concerning your industry or domain of expertise.
- **Keep in regular touch with your connections to maintain your relationships.**
e.g.: Find ways to keep in touch with people you meet; proactively manage contact frequency.
- **Identify people who are good sources of new contacts.**
e.g.: Who has put you in contact with new people in the past six months?



② Position yourself strategically

The influence acquired through your networks depends largely on your own position within and contribution to them.

- **Define from the start how you would like to be seen by the members of each network and adapt your contribution in consequence.**
e.g.: Do you want to be seen as an expert, as an old hand, or as a facilitator? Do you plan to give constructive criticism, share your experience, provide resources, etc.?
- **Play on your ability to interlink your different networks: being the bridge between networks often confers a special type of influence.**
e.g.: Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded his influence by putting together networks developed at different periods of his life.



③ Diversify your networks

Focusing exclusively on one type of network will limit your potential resources and influence and may make you too dependent.

- **Cultivate different types of networks.**
e.g.: Mix industry and functional networks; develop close-knit networks of trusted advisors as well as looser networks to share information more broadly.
- **Keep a discerning eye on viewpoints supported by each network.**
e.g.: A Stanford University study showed that networks can incite leaders to make bad decisions by giving them a false sense of consensus. Therefore, if all of your advice comes from a single network, ask yourself what someone in a competing network might think.
- **Regularly audit your networks.**
e.g.: Which networks are active and which are in decline? What are their membership profiles? How are they evolving?



④ Adapt your networks as you evolve

Your needs will change with shifts in the roles and responsibilities you take on. Remember to adapt your networks in consequence.

- e.g.: You have just been appointed to a leadership position:
- What influential people should be part of your networks from now on?
 - To what extent should you reinforce some historical networks, such as people who can provide you with relevant information, for example?
 - What currently dormant networks should be reactivated?
 - Are you gravitating toward any new circles that could serve as springboards?