

CASE STUDY: NETWORKING THE POWER OF THEM

Situation

When I was “emancipated” from my long term employment at a large cap pharma, I had a large network but they were mostly focused internally. This was an asset in good times but a potential liability during re-organizations and downsizing, especially those that impact senior leadership.

Action

I had made a fortuitous choice to join a non-profit Board several years earlier. This was the beginning of my “external” network. The next step was to embrace social media, especially LinkedIn (LI), empowered by JibberJobber (network relationship management system). The next step was to engage one-on-one and online to meet and develop trusted relationships with individuals who share my passions and experiences.

Result

A few years and many cups of coffee later, I now have a large LI network of nearly 2,500 globally and a vibrant inner circle crossing industries and geographies. Some advocate only having a trusted inner circle. This deep resource pool yields referrals which are genuine. There is also an extended track record of mutual support. Supplementing the inner circle with a large but “shallow” network creates a different resource. The large network provides a venue to disseminate messages to a very broad and diverse audience.

Lasting impact

Many lament the economic and unemployment challenges starting ~ 2008. I actually see these challenges as a significant opportunity to return to healthier roots. At our country’s birth, people depended on family, friends, and neighbors. Somewhere along the way, we became dependent on the government and our employers. Current challenges have shone a spotlight on networking. Essentially, we have returned to a support system composed of family, friends, and neighbors – a very healthy change and far more sustainable!

Keys to success:

- Networking is most powerful when it is ongoing, not initiated at a time of need – “networking for life”
- You must authentically and consistently seek to help the other individual without any expectation of return on investment – “The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive.” Albert Einstein
- It becomes easy to try to help “everyone” but you should focus your network on individuals who have personal relevancy – could be shared experiences, passions, aspirations, or other – helping “everyone” can mean you help no one
- Strive for a diverse network – if your connections are all from work or an alumni association, your reach will only modestly expand – engage a mix of community, business, non-profit, and pleasure
- Routinely engage your inner circle!



What people are saying....

- “He’s a great person who cares about others and supports them in their endeavors”*
- “I would say his greatest strength is actively listening to others’ views to build consensus. Ed is very adept at building relationships.”*
- “Ed has a very diverse network from careers in the military, biopharma, and non-profit worlds. He recently helped me when I was conducting a search for a very specific and unusually qualified candidate, quickly identifying five meaningful referral sources.”*
- “At the end of our first meeting, I found that the entire conversation had been devoted to my aspirations. In talking with others, I found out this outcome was not specific to me. Ed truly gives back and pays it forward, without regard to personal gain.”*

* Comments made by colleagues and managers in an anonymous online survey.