

Building Reach Beyond Your Team

Networking without the performance.
A few honest questions and permission to do less of it, better.

MARGARET COLLINS
CONFIDENCE | CLARITY | COURAGE
VISIT MARGARETCOLLINS.COM

Using the

Building Reach Beyond Your Team

Workbook

To create a successful career, good work is necessary but not enough.

We need to find and use several ways to present ideas, share thoughts, have our voice heard, in the room and beyond.

Active engagement in meetings, delivery of memorable presentations, these are valuable communication channels.

To have a greater impact and a truly sustainable career,
we benefit from being part of a community of contacts
who share information, insight, opportunity and honest reflection.

Some would call that a network.

Here's a way to do that less, and better

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

Does your network need attention?

When you notice:

- Most people you know agree with you
- You're the one reaching out to others
- You hear of opportunities after the event
- Your contacts are mostly in one place/sector
- You're not aware of future opportunities before they emerge...

The chances are that you'd do well to consciously upgrade your network.

If you recognise this:

- The word "networking" makes you think of a conference reception, forced small talk and a stack of business contacts you'll not look at again.
- You've told yourself your work should speak for itself, so reaching out to someone you don't know yet feels off - like an imposition on their time and attention or even like seeking unfair advantage.
- You know, in theory, that a wider circle of contacts would help your career. In practice, you've never quite worked out where to start.

Then your concept of networking could benefit from a complete reframe.

None of this means you're bad at networking.
It usually means nobody ever showed you a version of networking you could actually see yourself doing.

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1. Most Networks Form By Accident

Most of us network with whoever's easy to reach: people at the next desk, the teams we collaborate with, the ones already in our inbox.

It takes less energy and it feels natural.

It's also quietly limiting, because it rarely brings in a genuinely new source of information or opportunity.

Unconscious Network Design

- Connects with people who are already like you
- Shaped by proximity and convenient situations
- Comfortable, but rarely brings anything new

Conscious Network Design

- A small number of deliberate, considered connections
- Actively seeks different expertise or perspective
- Takes a little more intention, creates greater rewards

If you planned your network with the same care you'd give a grant application, what would you do differently?

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2. Three Questions Before You Reach Out

Many of us have this belief: networking is something we *should* be doing.

No wonder we feel resentful! How about some better reasons to network?!

- **Why, at this stage of my career?**

  Is it about the potential for my learning, increasing my visibility, finding collaborators or just keeping my future options open?

  These different motives call for different people and different conversations.

- **Who's actually useful to know?**

  Useful doesn't mean senior or impressive. It means someone who holds information, experience or a perspective I don't currently have access to. They may already exist in an underdeveloped part of your network or you might need to extend your network to include them.

- **What can I offer?**

  A relationship that starts with “What can I get?” often feels exploitative. Especially earlier in our career, we feel we have nothing of value to offer.

  But each of us has the capacity to offer genuine interest, an observation, even a paper we have read.

  Sometimes an introduction to a colleague or new source we have discovered holds up better than beginning a relationship with a request.

  Counterintuitively, asking something small and specific, a genuine question about their work, can build connection just as effectively as offering something first. People tend to warm to those they've helped, provided the ask is direct, personal and easy to say yes to.

Networking isn't self-promotion.
It's mutual exchange, and it can start with something you give,
or something small you genuinely ask for.

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3. You Don't Need To Work The Room

Often our worst nightmare is that 90 minute networking session, endless small talk with strangers... It doesn't need to be that way!

- Two meaningful conversations beat ten business cards.
- One good connection made at a conference beats an evening of constant small talk.
- Following up properly with two people beats collecting twenty contacts you'll never message again.

A little preparation makes small talk easier to start and easier to move past.

Before an event, have two or three genuine openers ready:

- something in the news, widely discussed or genuine niche interest
- a research paper you've seen recently that changes the field
- which talks or sessions you're planning to see.

None of it needs to be clever. It just needs to give the conversation somewhere to go while you figure out if you have more in common.

You have permission to:

- Have one or two quieter conversations and stop there
- Leave an event once you've had a genuinely good conversation, rather than staying to be "dedicated"
- Choose depth over breadth, every time

This isn't a lower standard.
It's the version of networking that actually works.



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4. Your Move

Think of one person, doing work adjacent to or complimentary to yours, that you don't currently know directly.

Send them one message this week.

Not a pitch, an opening: something you noticed in their work, a genuine question about what they do, something useful you can offer first or a simple invitation to coffee.

Reflection:

Who's the one person you've been meaning to reach out to and what is it that’s stopped you so far?



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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook helps you recognise, being connected - networked - is about building community.

Community can help you become the person who is known for the work you do and connect you to people who need your expertise or insight.

It's also the pattern we've explored previously: committees appoint people they already know. A wider circle doesn't mean chasing opportunities. It means more people already know your name by the time an opportunity appears.

Choosing to consciously develop your professional network isn't arrogance or seeking unfair advantage, it's a wise career strategy to make the value you already create more visible.

The full Developing Professional Networks workshop goes further into strategic preparation for conferences, managing energy in networking conversations and mapping your existing network for hidden opportunities.

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

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