Network Thinking Skills Analysis

Skill 1
Network Strategy

Network Strategy

Influence

Networking

Collaboration For Diversity

Engagement

Digital Communication

Empowerment
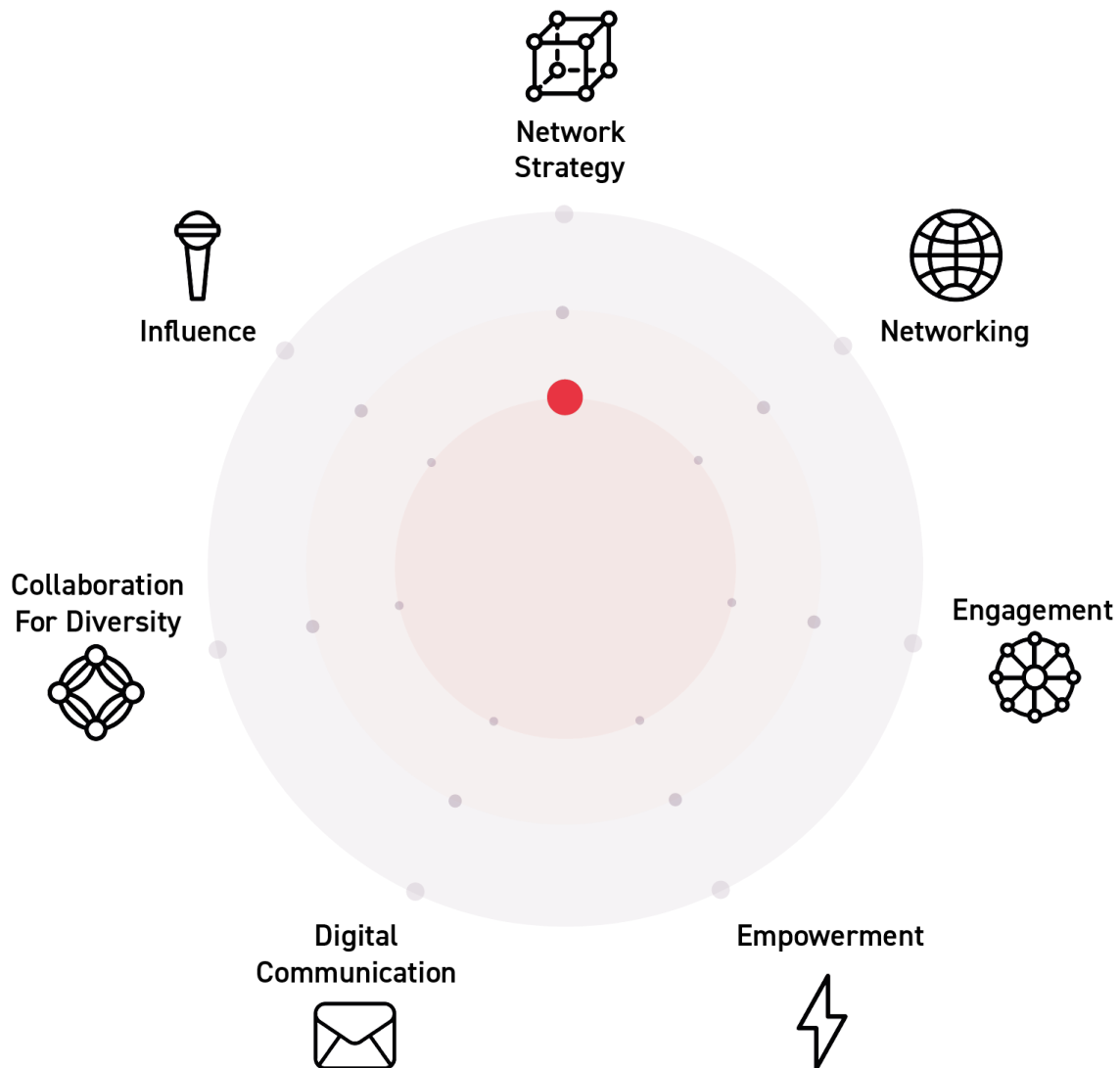
Skill Level: Basic

How to read your results

This is a description of Skill 1. Network Strategy. Read about this specific skill and reflect upon our recommendations. These recommendations are based on your Network IQ score. Use them to improve your capacity to design a more efficient network strategy.

Network Thinking Skill Description

Skill 1. Network Strategy

Designing a network strategy is the foundational skill comprised of understanding both the structure of social networks and dynamics of networking. It means you know which networks are needed, which networks to build or grow, and from which networks you can or should disconnect.

Network structure is the ability to map and analyze your current networks and position in these networks. You can judge the impact of the networks on your performance by becoming aware of the positive and negative ways in which networks impact your life, career, and or business.

Network dynamics is the "switching" ability in a network. Switching is a strategy of how members in a network trade knowledge, talent and access to business opportunities. By understanding the different switching processes you become more innovative and can innovate faster to drive impactful growth of your career, business, or social project.

The skill of how to design your Network Strategy is the foundational skill for the Network IQ competence model.

Your key takeaways

- Become much more aware of your current strategic skills gaps which limit or mistarget your networking habits. This is the first step towards building a more effective network strategy.

- Become more strategic by recognizing the importance of strategic networking for your future success. This will be done by dedicating more time for networking with the right people at the right time in the right context.

- Your attitude to diversity conditions your creativity. Seek more diverse environments to unleash your creative skills and understand the world better through its amazing diversity.

- Recognize the immense power of purpose. 'A small group of committed citizens can change the world.' Learn to listen to how others talk about their 'why' and join communities of people with a shared purpose.

- You have a lot of potential to improve your network strategy yet it will require substantial investment. Stay focused on your objective. It is worth your effort since your network is your capital for the future in times of uncertainty and disruption.

Personal Recommendations

Skill 1. Network Strategy
Level Basic

How you can succeed
A networking strategy creates the framework for you to choose the right people, the right communities and the right ecosystems for networking.

Why you succeed
Strategic networking saves you time while getting access to the right people, at the right time and in the right way.

How you can be more successful
These insights and recommendations are based on your results from the Network Intelligence test.

1.1. Strategic disposition

1.1.1. Your natural talent
Your Network IQ score indicates that you occasionally think about social dynamics. This may mean that you rarely analyze how other people relate to you and how they relate to others. You sometimes are able to detect a friendly soul or identify a potential enemy. At times you may put thought into choosing your friends and your fights. It is unlikely you are able to clearly explain it, but it is there. You are quite special as a mix of natural talent and experience further developing them. You have a lot of potential to grow if you expose yourself to the right networking activities and communities.

1.1.2. Your networking habits
Some people are natural connectors. They spontaneously introduce people to each other. Based on your Network IQ results, you may rarely take pleasure in being a spontaneous network facilitator. You may find more satisfaction if you take an analytical process behind the well-intended action of connecting a person with an opportunity. You most likely will see more positive results with your connections by mindfully drawing a one-page network strategy. There is more clarity when you write things down and you will become more strategic. It allows you to prioritize your networks to align with your goals and purpose. This will help you find your purpose - network fit.

1.1.3. Your biases
You are also special in the way you learn how to interact with others. Your results indicate that you learn from a more systematic search for data as compared to others that gather more information from socializing. As many people often do, you may limit yourself by rarely reaching

out to people from whom you can learn. Probably it feels uncomfortable, especially if you do not know someone well. Most probably you are influenced by stereotypes or subtle biases that may often prevent you from seeing clearly opportunities to connect with the right person, at the right time, in the right way.

1.1.4. Your choices

It is unlikely you find it easy to explain your networking activities, why you interact, and how you build relationships over time. But even if you are not able to explain it, you do have a strategy. Your natural instinct and predisposition conditions you to make your choices. This series of decisions you take and actions that follow are your strategy. Take some time to think about what is your current strategy.

1.2. Learn to be more strategic

1.2.1. Your critical thinking skills

Your Network IQ results show it is most likely unusual for you to observe the environment and focus on the social network analysis. You rarely have a mental map of who is who, and what is important to each person or group of people and why. It seems uncommon that you see the social structure of a community and how people are interconnected. Try observing your environment at the next meeting or conference. See if you can identify what is important to each person or group.

When identifying a person's values and priorities, scrutinize your own assumptions. We are all conditioned by our culture and personal experiences which can cause flaws in our thinking. Stereotyping a person and subtle biases are enemies of a rational strategic approach. You may be surprised to discover what you assumed is actually not true. Here you can read a HRB article by Helen Lee Bouygues about 3 Simple Habits to Improve Your Critical Thinking and use these habits for strategic networking.

1.2.2. Your trust

When beginning a relationship it seems you occasionally give a person some trust. Your test results indicate you prefer to put them in a position where they have to earn your trust rather than betting they are trustworthy. The truth is that some people are trustworthy and others are not. Try to be more open minded in small amounts to stretch your comfort but while being careful not to not give away for free your knowledge, connections or reputation. Here is a great inspirational talk by Rachel Botsman about the paradox of digital trust. It will help you reflect on why the new economy grows faster than the old economy. To a large extent this is because the organizations born in the digital age often are more capable in building networks with users and customers. These networks are based on trust. There are a lot of trust-based network strategies that traditional firms and other organizations could learn to succeed faster in the transition to the digital economy.

1.2.3. Your complex problem solving skills

The way you answered questions on the Network Intelligence test indicates that probably quite rarely you take a systemic look when solving complex problems with others. It may seem unusual for you to see how different elements of a system interconnect and interact within social networks. You are not always able to see the weak points and missing links within the system. You probably rarely notice patterns which tend to repeat in similar situations. Practice by detecting and tracing these patterns from past experiences to train your analytical network strategy design skills. You may choose some common social networks patterns as examples and search for them in the real world. What holds social networks is communication. And so the easiest way to look for social network patterns is to analyze with whom and how people in your network communicate.

1.3. Your people strategy

1.3.1. Your attitude to diversity

Chances are that you surround yourself with people based on the shared value system. You look for people who share your beliefs and convictions. Values are what consolidates your social networks by creating stronger bonds and building a sense of belonging. In short, you have a sense of identity and this is what attracts certain people to you giving you a capacity to build networks with others. Beware you probably network with people like you. While you feel comfortable in such a company this greatly limits the diversity of your ecosystem. The less diverse your ecosystem is, the more difficult it is for you to be innovative. Focus more on what you could do to create more diverse networks. There are many organizations which have put inclusion and diversity at the core of their strategy. You can learn more about it by reading the Diversity and Inclusion Index to build your network strategy towards innovation through diversity and inclusion.

1.3.2. Your attitude to power

Driven by a limited strategic Network Thinking capacity, you probably find it quite difficult to draw a roadmap from point A to B by navigating your network. This roadmap could provide you not only a short-term advantage, but also a long-term competitive advantage. Challenge yourself to look far beyond the daily hustle when connecting with others. Seeing the long-term purpose of your networking activities may allow you to be able to take a shortcut. Such a shortcut is usually built on a trusted relations developed over some time with persons who have a high status in your network. In other words, trust is the enabler which actually allows you to make such a shortcut. When needed you will be able, for example, to gain access to valuable information faster than members of your network who have not invested in developing such a relationship.

Watch out for blind spots. Most people fail to recognize that, subconsciously, they project their behavior in the physical world to the digital environment. It means that they use digital tools but think in a traditional way. Concretely, for example, they relate to persons through the social networking sites assuming the hierarchy of the physical world. Since in many organizations the hierarchy still reflects some sort of bureaucratic or functional culture with a relatively high power distance and formal communication procedures, they project these cultural norms also to the digital world. To some extent they are right and this is why.

On the one hand strategic thinking about your networking activities may help you develop a shortcut to high-status network members, but it may disconnect you from a network or part of your network, if you are not skillful enough. To be on the safe side, you may follow and respect the norms of communication across digital and physical channels. The fact that you are connected with a person on social media does not entitle you to show in public that you are friends, especially if you are not. Build your Thinking Skills before taking risks to jeopardize your position in a community.

We are working on the Network Thinking Etiquette to improve cross-cultural literacy on social media and communicate more effectively in the international networks. Send us your suggestions and co-create the Etiquette guidelines with us and other Network Thinkers.

1.3.3. Your social networks

Most probably your social networks have been built over time but with minimal strategy running the risk of uniformity. In some cases your networks may be more extended than the networks of your peers. In other cases they may be smaller. In both cases, they are minimally strategic in the sense that you are loosely connected through a few diverse networks to the right ecosystems, types of communities and people who are connectors and influencers. Do you know who are the

most powerful influencers in your network? Check this analytics tool and assess your social media networks.

1.3.4. Your team

Your score from the Network IQ test suggests that the strategic value of your network comes from your connections with the right people who can share relevant information or introduce you to opportunities for development. Networking without a strategy can be even to some extent dangerous as you could lose more than you gain. As you are in an open network environment, you are surrounded by people with competitive objectives and aspirations. Look more to build win-win opportunities otherwise you may lose to a competitor when you thought they were a collaborator. For example, you are sharing ideas with a fellow network member when you realize they have copied your ideas, hired your best employees or exploited unique opportunities. Contact us if you would like us to build an assessment of the Network IQ for your team, community members or partners to prevent you from losing your key assets when interacting across networked communities and ecosystems.

1.4. The power of purpose

1.4.1. Your 'why'

Always start with "why". The key to success is a purpose - network fit. If there is no purpose - network fit, your network however big or diverse may not be useful in the long-term. Only networks that fit your purpose have value now. Use Simon Sinek framework of "Why? How? What?" to define your purpose. Here is an example*: I believe every person should have access to opportunities and grow personally or professionally. I empower entrepreneurial minded people to grow through collaboration. I share my insights and knowledge through networking tools.* Here you can see more about Dr. Daria's impact from her purpose driven life and business.

1.4.2. Your networking strategy

According to your Network IQ score you may find it challenging to assess your current network and identify the right networks and connect the right people (even if this is not conscious). Spontaneous networking may make you feel awkward. Most likely even if you do it, networking just takes your time and leaves you with a bunch of contacts and business cards on your desk after an event. You probably find it challenging to know how to follow up with people you met. You may not even see any value in why it is worthwhile to follow up and how these connections in the long-term may help you reach your goal. Next time when you have a networking opportunity take a more strategic approach. Try the slow networking approach with just two or three people rather than a dozen. The slow networking approach is more relaxed and relationship-based rather than transaction-based. Skill, to make if successful and strategic, do not forget that this contact may be of value if you:

1. Have contact details to this person (best already in your smartphone).
2. Connected on social media (right on the spot).
3. Discovered whom you know in common (when connecting on social media).
4. Identify at least one opportunity how you could help each other within the next 2 weeks (it makes sense to agree on next steps which gives you a permission and clarity on how to continue building the relationship).
5. Know about the other person something that is not known in public (and promise to keep that information only to yourself).

1.5. More to think about

1.5.1. Your switching capacity

Switching is a rare skill. Switching means a person can connect two networks and facilitate "trading" between them. Your score shows that you still need to focus a lot on how to develop this strategic capacity. Connecting two networks together happens, for example, when you introduce two people to each other. By connecting them you connect their networks. This gives you the opportunity to become a 'switch'. In other words, a 'switch' is a broker that facilitates exchange of information between buyers and sellers.

We have data on the Network IQ profiles of persons who consider themselves as 'switches' and we are happy to share our research if you contact us.

1.5.2. Your brand image

Do you consider yourself a good networker?our Network Intelligence test results suggest that there is quite a lot for you to learn. Remember strategic networking skills are just skills. With the right mindset you can learn any skills. The first step can be for example building an ease for starting a conversation. Although it is only a tiny piece of high Network IQ for effective strategic networking, it is a good first step. Indeed, being able to overcome an initial stress when approaching a person you do not know. It is actually an important step because the more at ease you are when networking, the more enjoyable the networking process becomes. The more you enjoy networking, the more likely you are to pursue networking opportunities and the more you practice networking in diverse environments, the more innovative and creative you become.

1.5.3. Your Network Thinking Power Map

It is common knowledge in business that if you want to advance your career or project you 'never eat lunch alone'. Plan realistically how many social interactions such as a lunch or a coffee can you can realistically schedule per week. Keep a record of such networking activities versus the plan.

Download the Network Thinking Power Map to help you build an action plan and prioritise the strategic, high-potential members of your networks. Writing down notes after meetings with the persons whom you qualify as the 'right people' will help you become more and more strategic about how you invest your time. Remember, Network Thinking is not about networking as transactional activity. It is about your capacity to deepen tightly-knit relationships in your local network and develop loosely-coupled relations in the global world.

Self-Reflection

Date
Add the date for your 3 month accountability

My strengths
Make a list of your strengths related to this specific skill (at least 3)

My opportunities for improvement
Make a list of the behaviors you would like to improve. (No more than 3)
Then star the behavior that is easiest to change.

My next steps
Write down 3 commitments on how you will develop your skills over the next 3 months

Smile :-)
The future is good!