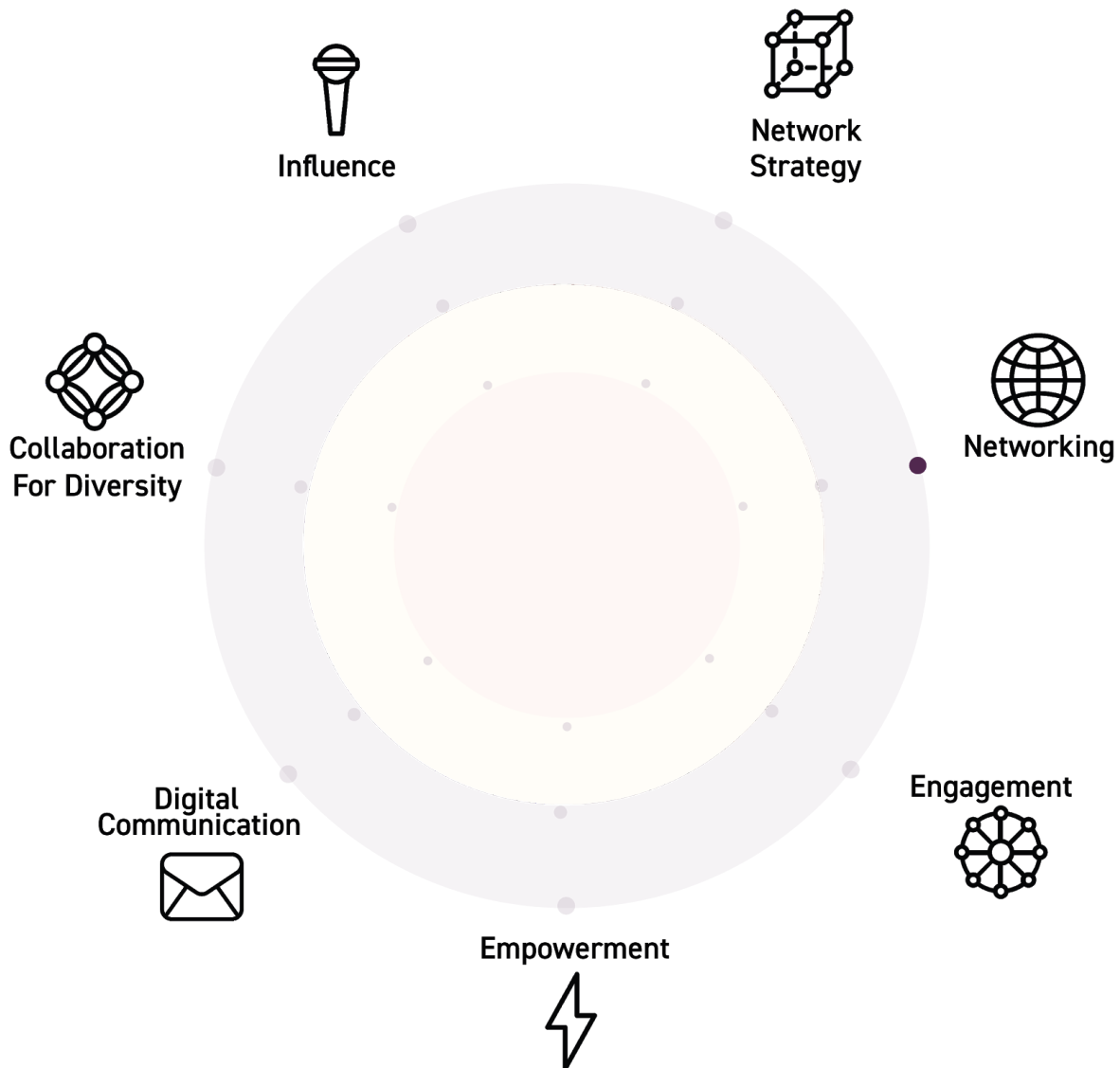


Network Thinking Skills Analysis

Skill 2 Networking



Skill Level: Advanced

How to read your results

This is a description of Skill 2. Networking. 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 2. Networking

The Networking skill demonstrates your capacity to build networks, communities, partnerships and collaborations. In the digital age, networking can be considered as one of the core skills for innovation and co-creation of value when working in distributed or virtual teams and crowdsourcing knowledge and skills locally and globally.

Networking is a skill which establishes a connection between two people or two groups of people. You can think about the two people as nodes in your network. The node can also be a collective entity that is a community. The more people communicate in a network the more connected they become. With time this connectedness creates bonding, trust, and a sense of belonging. This is how clustering takes place and ultimately communities emerge.

Every person is engaged to some extent in networking. However, it is not that often that people network with a strategy to use networking to become more creative and innovative. The more creative and innovative people and organizations are the more competitive they are. In times where complex problem solving is one of key skills for the future, strategic networking can be a powerful tool. Our research shows that less than 20% of persons use networking to monitor market changes and disrupt the market. They declare that over 80% of their strategic networking skills are highly impactful.

Networking is based on the capacity to build, grow and maintain networks. Some people like networking and find it entertaining. They enjoy connecting with people and creating new opportunities by 'connecting the dots.' For other people, networking is challenging and they do it because they see a value in investing in their networks. There is also a group of people who do not understand that networking is core to building their future.

The skill of Networking is one of the skills in the Network Dynamics level. This level is part of the Network IQ Index™ which is a competence model for the future of work.

Your key take-aways

- Re-evaluate your networking strategy to become more innovative. This can be done by being authentically curious about other people and communities. Continue to drive your curiosity and this will continue to nurture your creativity.
- You are strategic when networking. Remember networking is a great opportunity to learn. One of the fastest ways to learn is through people making you more competitive.

- You strategically limit your networking activities to focus on higher impact connections. To this end you will continue to build your status in networks. There may be an opportunity to take a more mindful approach to your personal branding to align to your different identities in different networks.
- Data is the crude oil of today. You seem to frequently use networking to get access to valuable information and insights. Continue to frame these data points in the context of complex problems you will likely come across.
- Networking takes time and money. Remember to think in terms of return on investment when planning your strategic networking activities. Sometimes less is more.

Personal Recommendations

Skill 2. Networking Level Advanced

How you can succeed

You network across different social environments. Faced with a challenge you can quickly 'connect the dots' and find the right person to talk to, to help resolve the challenge.

Why you succeed

Knowing many people you have a possibility to connect a person to an opportunity. You are able to turn a potential into a value.

How you can be more successful

These insights and recommendations are based on your results from the Network Intelligence test.

2.1. Innovation and networking

2.1.1. Your innovativeness

Connecting networking with innovation may seem like an uncommon approach. However, if you look at your networking activity you may realize that quite often you have a feeling that investing time in networking has given you something tangible. This is likely because you apply strategic thinking to your networking activities. One step to further this direction is to network with innovative people in innovative environments who are currently outside of your current ecosystem. Actually, innovative people who are open to sharing their ideas when networking are very valuable members of your network. Probably most of your colleagues appreciate you for your ability to come up with new ideas or reframe existing ideas. If this does not happen that often, remember that the more innovative and open you are the more value you potentially bring to your network.

2.1.2. Your curiosity

Curiosity is the very basis of innovation. Most likely you rarely network just for the pleasure of connecting with people. It may be actually quite superficial. Your Network Intelligence test shows that you almost always bring a strategic element into networking by taking a deeper interest in other people's motivations, challenges, needs and also into broader issues. For example, taking a particular interest in emerging trends in technology or social tendencies. It seems you frequently network with eagerness to learn new things. And this is great. It is beneficial to frequently bring a strategic dimension to networking. You can nurture your curiosity through a playful approach. Try not to be too serious or at least openly say that you want to play 'devil's advocate', that is a person who - by default - questions assumptions of other people. For example, when talking with a person during a networking cocktail, ask open ended questions which make your interlocutor

examine the assumptions of his or her statements. Remember, humor and jokes work fine only if you are culturally literate. If by any chance you are not confident with humor related issues in international settings, better play it safe and ask questions in a serious manner. One of the key rules for a strategic networking etiquette is to avoid being perceived as arrogant.

2.1.3. Your creativity

The power of human creativity as the basis of innovation, and ultimately entrepreneurial behavior, is one of our greatest attributes as a species. Your Network IQ score shows that you are quite innovative and rarely you do not know how to connect networking with innovation. Remember to appreciate yourself often for having the capacity to come up with unique insights. Nurture your ingenuity as it makes you more interesting to others. One of the best and simplest ways to nurture ingenuity is by making lists of 11 alternative ideas to solve a problem or answer a question. For example, when a person comes and asks for your help, make a list of 11 alternative solutions. Normally people get stuck between solution 6 and 7. And it is really hard to come up with the top solutions on the list that is to go beyond solution 8 to 11. Take a piece of paper and write down 11 ideas on how to build your networks. Practice ingenuity now.

2.2. Less networking, more impact

2.2.1. Your impact

A powerful way to develop strategic networking skills is by learning to 'connect the dots'. It can be concluded when analyzing your Network Intelligence test results that you are strategic when networking. For example, when you hear a person express a need, chances are that you hear what she says, ask questions to better understand the 'pain'. You are often open to sharing information and not in a purely transactional way but to make a greater impact within your network. You may of course recognize that sharing brings value back as it facilitates the flow of information in your ecosystem. This one piece of information may be a critical piece of a larger puzzle bringing in a disruption or discontinuity. Imagine that you do a puzzle. You usually take a piece and try to match it with other pieces to create an image. Continue practicing 'connect the dots' in real situations and think strategically about who may value the information. As the saying goes 'one person's trash is another's treasure.' Before you speak out offering your view on how to 'connect the dots', think for whom this piece of information may be of real value. Being strategic is about making more impact with less effort.

2.2.2. Your access to data

Data is the crude oil of today and you probably know the value of information. Your Network IQ shows that you can gather, analyze and read data. Yet you may sometimes struggle to be very knowledgeable about how to manage the data flow and build algorithms that provide neutral answers. Big data and learning algorithms distort the content you read and can impact the quality of information you receive in your feeds. Strategic networking is one of the most efficient ways to get an insight from your network which will help you actually ask the right question in the right way when processing big data. And more importantly validate the answer the big data has provided.

Read about the impacts [Amazon experienced with Big Data and self learning algorithms](#).

2.2.3. Your status

The Network Intelligence test shows that you are a trusted member of your community. You can validate this observation by thinking about if and how often people ask for your help to progress their professional career or developing a business. The more strategic you are as a person of reference, a source of quality information the higher is your status as a networking partner. It is

better to be considered as a strategic network partner by few people in your network rather than being just one more number in a crowd of followers. Your status in a network is based on the value you bring to other network members. The higher your status, the more central becomes your position in the structure of the network. The higher your status is the more influence you have over the behavior of people in the network. Consider the power of micro or nano influencers. Today a single tweet or post may become viral. Therefore, treat any single request for advice with as much respect as you can. These seemingly meaningless moments could have great exponential returns later.

2.3. A networking etiquette

2.3.1. Your mindfulness

Given your Network Intelligence test outcome you are quite diligent about using your network. For example, chances are that on occasion you network with a person who tries to use you as a connector to one of your trusted networks. Luckily you are always mindful and limit your openness to share the trust you have developed over time. Continue to stay in tune with yourself. It is normal to feel some discomfort, unease or even anxiety when networking. As you likely know preference to stay popular, show off or impress is the root to this discomfort. To maintain your intuition strength, reflect about a past situation when you felt disappointed once you opened your networks to someone. Has this happened more than once? Are there any similar patterns? What was the signal that you ignored and why?

2.3.2. Your Friendliness

With your Network IQ you are always aware that it is better to be courteous than arrogant and you nearly always realize how others perceive you. It is always easier to build networks if you are kind. Kindness differs from culture to culture. Think of people who are courteous and authentically kind. Do they seem out of date? Do they look like losers? Indeed, the code of behavior varies between the networks so kindness may mean different things. This is why the basic rule when networking is to try to be as kind as you possibly can, share relevant insights and listen to others' thoughts, praise others accomplishments, and be welcoming to strangers.

Read about how [Survival of the friendliest from Bloomberg](#) to further understand why kindness is vital for survival.

2.4. Your branding, status and identity

2.4.1. Your personal branding

By taking this test you seem to be aware that it is important to network to gain status. Your Network IQ results indicate you are well aware of how to build your status in your network. If you are looking for a new idea, one way to grow your status is to ask for recommendations from high-status network members. Your Network IQ score suggests that you consider yourself extremely skillful at building networks. Be careful that this does not become your weakness. Some people may label you as 'just a skillful networker' rather than a source of valuable information or an influencer. Scarce resources tend to be more valued. Be strategic when choosing which events to attend and in which fora to stay active.

2.4.2. Your status

As you likely know sometimes people in your network apply labels to you. With your Network IQ, you probably frequently notice situations where a person is trying to rebrand themselves, however people tend to always think of this person as the original label. For example, a salesperson was

always a salesperson and not a senior executive, or an engineer was a tech expert but not a business leader. Given your Network IQ you probably already know how to manage such a situation. It is likely you have successfully rebranded yourself to achieve a higher status or build a new brand in a new network. You can read more recommendations about building your status in networks when reading our recommendations for Skill 7. Influence.

2.4.3. Your identity

If your networks are super large, address books full of content cards and followers come from around the globe, you are likely a skilled networker and connector. You most probably built your network over time by helping people through connections. It is a natural predisposition to be connected today. Given your Network Intelligence results you are well connected to different networks. You are always aligning your personal brand with your identity. You are likely aware of the importance of managing your reputation in a way which is authentic. You may appreciate the reminder, maintaining your true self rather than adjusting to a public persona in the long term is more strategic. Brands change. Identity, values and culture remain. Be authentic. This will most likely maintain your Network IQ and you are likely to feel good about yourself and build a respectable brand name of high status.

2.5. The network size matters

2.5.1. Your network as an asset

Given your Network IQ, when you compare yourself to your peers, you always see that you have managed to build more networks that are different and belong to diverse online communities. You probably already examine the size of your network and compare it to relevant peers in your professional domain, colleagues you collaborate with or foremost your competitors. These networks are your key asset. When comparing it is important to remember you can buy followers but it is not that easy or instantaneous to build a community. A further analysis of engagement of your peer networks will help you to understand their community size. Chances are that you are one of the few people who are able to connect others in the network in a strategic way. This allows you to build communities faster. As you are likely aware, it is hard for truly disruptive ideas to be born in a highly networked and homogeneous community. Consider that sometimes at the very periphery of networks is where novel and breakthrough ideas are generated.

2.5.2. Your status is what you share

Chances are, given your Network IQ score, that you are very selective when connecting with different people and sharing with them what you have to offer: information, knowledge, skills. You almost always have a set of criteria 'go' or 'no go' when someone approaches you offering a business card or invites to connect on social media. Some people with a similar Network IQ score to yours build glass walls to maintain their high level status. They could be trying to avoid entering into relationships with people who have lower status than theirs or are coming from a very different social background, industry or country. Be true to yourself, however bear in mind that too rigorous of criteria could limit the diversity of people and thought within your ecosystem. Lack of diversity is known to hinder creativity and innovation. If you are not connected you cannot share. Sharing the right resources in the right way with the right people is what makes networking strategic.

2.6. Networking is like savings

2.6.1. Your long-term perspective

Your Network IQ indicates that you likely understand that networking is like saving or even better, like investing. Small amounts of smart investment accumulate to a small fortune over years. Most likely you know that networking works the same way. As you frequently invest your time smartly in strategic networking you will probably continue to see your status and influence continue to accumulate over the years. When analyzing your networking risk profile you seem to be quite open to connect with people whom you have never met before. It is now a question if you are also strategic enough to invest your precious time in the right networking activities.

2.6.2. Your research skills

Given your Network Intelligence results you are obviously quite comfortable networking but you can always learn how to do it better from others. It makes sense to do a bit of research and compare your networking practices to other professionals. For example, choose a few role models and do research how your community responds to them. Ask the question, how do people react when invited to connect on social media with people whom they never met in person? You will be surprised by the different reactions. If you are not surprised this means your research could have been more inquisitive. Consider expanding your research to people on the periphery of your community.

2.6.3. Your productivity

Based on your Network IQ score, you have experienced that networking takes time. Even if you have a network strategy, it still requires that you invest considerable amounts of time to connect with people, socialize, and engage on social media. Your time is the only resource that cannot be miraculously multiplied. The day only has 24h. Given the Network Intelligence results it is likely to assume that you have a clear priority of tasks and objectives for networking. Good work! You might benefit from a reminder that networking is key to innovation. Innovation is key to competitiveness. The more competitive you are the higher your chances are for greater returns on investment. This is how trillion dollar opportunities are born. Through networking. Continue your strategic networking.

2.6.6. Your time constraints

Depending on which stage in life you are, strategic networking looks like one of your priorities. But even with your Network IQ you may have heavy time constraints to build your networks for different reasons. Maybe you hold a junior position at work and your boss thinks that networking is not work. Maybe you have kids, and a lot of networking is not an option. We are here to remind you that networking is an investment in your future. If you haven't prioritized it recently, spare even one hour a day or a week for networking. Life is not a sprint. Some people think of their professional (and private) life journey as a marathon rather than a sprint. When the day comes and you need someone to support you, it is better at that time to have a network to reach out to for guidance, help and support. You are probably already having one networking lunch a week. Let us encourage you to either book your calendar now for the coming month or continue holding this practice. If you think you would like to review your strategy and revise your list of right people to network with this month, here is our [Network Thinking Power Map](#). This map is to help you reflect on your network strategy.

2.6.7. Your budget constraints

It is not easy to build networks and a higher status when networking with budget limitations. Quite often a company reserves a networking budget to a selected group of people most probably in

sales and business development. But networking can be beneficial for innovation, co-creation and smart growth not only sales. It may happen that you are looking for a budget friendly networking approach. Be pragmatic. It is better to build your network in a systematic way, for example making a few phone calls and/or sending a few emails per week than reaching out to people a few times per year during high-level (an expensive) events. As you likely know, the key is to not expect something from people you reach out to, but instead think about how you can help them. Continue being more relational and limit your transactional behavior. The more actions focused on relationship building will make the time you invest in networking have greater value for both you and your network. However, no doubt, budgets help when networking. :)

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

Networking is strategic for your future.