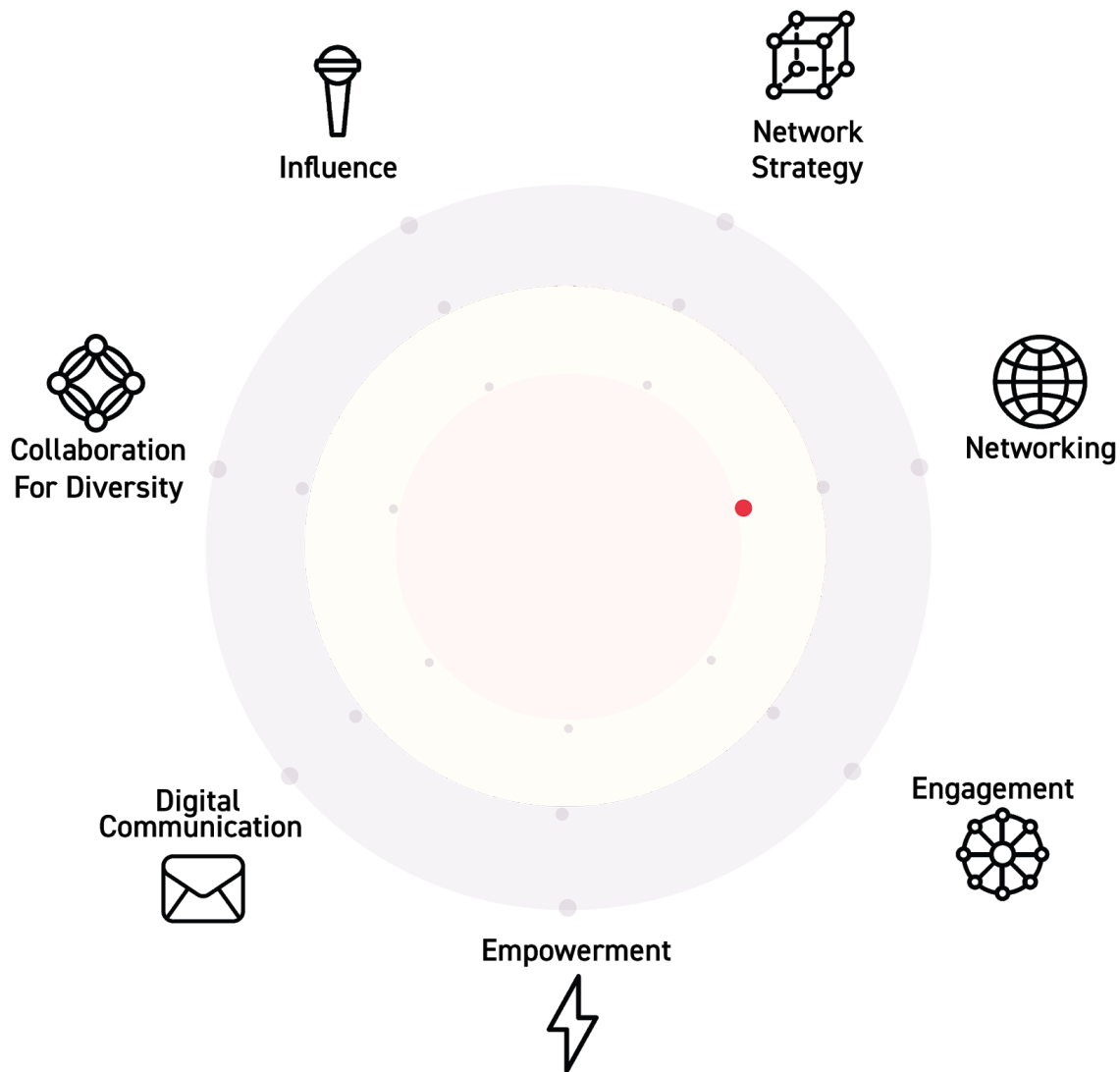


Network Thinking Skills Analysis

Skill 2 Networking



Skill Level: Basic

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 especially 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

- Explore the idea of networking to become more innovative. Authentic curiosity may be a habit that will help you learn more about people and communities. The more exposure you have to diverse ideas the more of a 360 degree view you will gain. The more curious you are the more you nurture your creativity.
- Be more strategic when networking as it is a great opportunity to learn. The faster you learn the more competitive you become in today's world.

- Limit your random networking activities and focus on gaining more impact with the networking activities you conduct. Build your status in networks with a more mindful approach to your personal branding.
- Data is the crude oil of today. Possibly increasing your networking activities to get access to valuable information and insights. This could frame these data points in the context of complex problems you will likely come across.
- Networking takes time and money. Think in terms of return on investment when planning your strategic networking activities. Sometimes less is more.

Personal Recommendations

Skill 2. Networking Level Basic

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 rarely you have a feeling that investing time in networking has given you something tangible. This is why you should more often apply strategic thinking into your networking activities. One step towards this direction is to network with innovative people in innovative environments. Actually, innovative people who are open to sharing their ideas when networking are very valuable members of your network. Probably a few 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. And it may be actually quite superficial. Your Network Intelligence test shows that you are bringing 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 often you network without being eager to learn new things. If this is true, it will hold you back. It would be beneficial for you if more often you brought a strategic dimension into 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 occasionally innovative and frequently you do not know how to connect networking with innovation. Appreciate yourself more often for trying to learn strategic networking in new ways and, in general, 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 occasionally strategic when networking. For example, when you hear a person expresses a need, chances are that you hear what she says, but you do not always ask questions to better understand the 'pain'. Chances are you are 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 build a puzzle. You usually take a piece and try to match it with other pieces to create an image. Practice 'connect the dots' in real situations. 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 there is a chance that you can gather, analyze and read data yet you may not be very knowledgeable about how to manage the data flows 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 received 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 need to rethink how to become perceived by more people as 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 of 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 often quite negligent about using your network. For example, on rare occasions you network with a person who tries to use you as a connector to a trusted network. You may not be very mindful and often too open to share the trust you have developed within the network. Continue to stay in tune with yourself. It is normal to feel some discomfort, unease or even anxiety being reserved about your trusted network. Often a preference to stay popular, show off or impress is the root to this discomfort. To begin building 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 probably know that it is always better to be courteous than arrogant but you may not 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 are likely already aware that it is important to network to gain status. However your Network IQ results indicate you are not sure how to build your status in your network. One way of doing it is to ask for recommendations from high-status network members. Your Network IQ score suggests that you may not consider yourself skillful at building networks. A lack of confidence may be your weakness. Scarce resources tend to be more valued however you may run the risk of being unknown. We encourage you to be active in building your network(s) with a strategy. Choose which events to attend and at which fora stay active to become an active yet scarce resource. You may want to avoid the opposite effect where some people would be

tempted to label you as ‘just a skillful networker’ rather than a source of valuable information or an influencer.

2.4.2. Your status

You may not realize that sometimes people in your network give you a label even if they try to change their expert field. 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. Based on your Network IQ, you might already know how to manage such a situation. Successfully rebranding yourself to build a higher status or a new brand in new networks is hard work. Learn from others, reflect on people you know that have successfully rebranded. Think about the actions they took and if you have the chance ask them for a coffee to learn more. You can also 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 may be a more skilled networker and connector than you realize. If not, do not worry, you can create new opportunities. A skilled networker builds the network over time by helping people through connections. It is a natural predisposition to be connected today. Given your Network Intelligence results you probably have the opportunity to connect to different networks. Note that a personal brand should be aligned with your identity. People that manage their reputation in a way which is authentic in the long term are more strategic. Brands change. Identity, values and culture remain. Be authentic. This will most likely surge 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, chances are that when you compare yourself to your peers, you believe that you have the opportunity to build more networks that are different and belong to diverse online communities. The best way to examine the size of your network is to compare it to the relevant peers in your professional domain, colleagues you collaborate with or foremost your competitors. These networks are your key asset as you can buy followers but it is not that easy or instantaneous to build a community. Chances are that you would like to be one of the few people who are able to connect others in the network in a strategic way. This ability allows you to build communities faster. The greatest impact as a connector is sometimes at the very periphery of networks where novel and breakthrough ideas are generated. It is hard for truly disruptive ideas to be born in a highly networked and homogeneous community.

2.5.2. Your status is what you share

Chances are, given your Network IQ score, that you are rather open when connecting with different people and sharing with them what you have to offer: information, knowledge, skills. You may want to consider 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 Network IQ score similar to yours are perceived to have a lower status. Other people in your network may build glass walls to prevent 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 you may benefit from a little more rigorous criteria to possibly encourage a more equal amount of diversity and unique thought within your ecosystem. Lack of diversity is known to hinder creativity and

innovation. If you are not connected to the right people, you cannot share effectively. 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 probably do not think that networking is like saving or even better, like investing. Small amounts of smart investment accumulate to a small fortune over years. The same works for networking. If you invest your time smartly in strategic networking you will likely be surprised as your status and influence accumulate over the years. When analyzing your networking risk profile you seem to not always be sure whether or not to connect with people whom you have never met before. After you've made the decision, it is important to 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 only occasionally 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, do research in your community. Observe and answer 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 different reactions. If you are not surprised, this might mean your research could have been more inquisitive and try expanding to asking individuals not in your immediate community.

2.6.3. Your productivity

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 has 24h. Given the Network Intelligence results it is fair to assume that there is opportunity for improvement in how you prioritize your tasks and objectives. You have made a great step by taking this test which likely has increased your awareness! Let's keep developing your skill. Negative thoughts about networking taking too much time is a quick way to the minor leagues. Networking is key for innovation. Innovation is key for 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. Just be more strategic. Networking is working.

2.6.6. Your time constraints

Depending on which stage in life you are, networking may sound like a last point on your priorities list. Your Network IQ implies 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. Maybe you are an introvert and you consider networking a waste of time. Let us encourage you to recognize that networking is an investment in your future. 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. Better at that time to have a network to reach out to for guidance, help and support. One networking lunch a week is a great place to start. Try to book your calendar now for the coming month. Be strategic and make a list of the right people to network with this month.

Here is our [Network Thinking Power Map](#) to help you reflect on your network strategy when making the short-term networking plan.

2.6.7. Your budget constraints

Building networks requires investment. Your Network IQ score demonstrates that you still have a lot to learn how to optimize your investment.

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. The key is to not expect something from people you reach out to, but instead think about how you can help them. Be 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 you personally 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.