



The Handler Report

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The care and feeding of your professional network

What every executive should know about growing and maintaining their network.

Having a strong network is critical to professional growth and success these days. Your network provides a direct interactive channel to share ideas, gather intelligence and get input on important business issues. As a friend of the firm we want to help you get the most from your network. So we thought we would share some tips about the care and feeding of a healthy network.

FOR STARTERS

You probably aren't going to hear anything that you don't already know in this brief. But before you dismiss any of these points, ask yourself if you are actually doing any of these activities on a regular basis. If you aren't, then your network might not be as healthy as you might think. Much of what we will discuss will be activated through digital channels. But today it's easy to engage in email and social media at the expense of face-to-face interaction. Remember these two behaviors complement each other, so every network maintenance strategy should contain a healthy balance of online and offline activities. This brief contains simple thought starters to help maintain this balance.

BUILD AND MAINTAIN YOUR LIST

As you build and maintain your list it's important to use a tool that will make the process easy to collect and communicate with your contacts. LinkedIn has become the ultimate business contact management tool so update your profile and start using it. When it comes to your network, the quality of the contacts and relationships represented mean everything.

- Make sure that all peers, reports, managers, and vendors and influencers from your past and present position are on your list.
- When you meet new people at networking events and business meetings, if you feel they will be valuable invite them to join your network.
- Set aside some time periodically to manage your list. Determine the last time you connected with the important people in your network and if it's been a while, send them a message.

TO HELP AND BE HELPED

Like any healthy business relationship, a healthy network is built on an equal exchange of helping and being helped. So it's important that you understand the importance of reciprocity. Reciprocity or paying it forward, produces a natural desire or social obligation to return a favor. People love getting things so helping



people is a great way to build relationships and ensure that the people in your network will be there for you when you need them.

ASKING FOR HELP

Asking for help is probably the easiest way to reach out to your network. It's also a great way to reengage if you haven't been active.

- Request suggestions for candidates for a full-time or contract position you are trying to fill.
- Inquire about service providers or ask for product recommendations.
- Gather information about leading conferences in your industry to build your skills.

HELPING OTHERS

Helping others can take a bit more time, thought and efforts. Consider what you have that people want. Sharing knowledge and experience that might be helpful to your network is an excellent way of building your personal brand. Here are some thought starters:

- Do a favor for someone in your network.
- Be thoughtful about finding people to mentor and take an interest in their development.
- Share your knowledge with your industry– post SlideShare presentations, write articles, participate in online discussion groups, etc.

GET OUT THERE

As we mentioned earlier you need to have a healthy mix of “real-world” and social media activities in your professional network development strategy, so here are some relationship building ideas.

- Ask an old associate out to lunch to catch up or

organize a get-together with a group you worked with in the past.

- Arrange to speak at an industry event. (If the speech is videotaped, post it on YouTube and share it with your network.)
- Invite colleagues to an event you plan on attending.

IN CONCLUSION

The more you put into the care and feeding of your professional network the more you will get out of it. So create a strategy that works for your situation and set aside time on your schedule to execute it.

The time we have invested in growing our professional network has directly translated to the efficiency of our services and the quality of the candidates we are able to present our clients. We hope you have found this helpful.

OFF THE RECORD



Gee Bob, during my job search you were obviously too busy to return my calls or join my network. But now here you sit...hmmm... What to do?...What to do?