

# MANAGEMENT OUTLOOK



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## NETWORKING- BETTER THAN OFFICE POLITICS

No matter how you look at it your success in business depends on your ability to successfully network. Some people consider networking "office politics" and avoid it, but there is much more to it.

**Communicate Up and Down The Ladder**  
Successful networking means being able to communicate effectively with your peers and your bosses, but also with your employees. Let's start at the bottom.

You will never make it to the top of the management ladder without the support of the employees below you. These are the people who do the work, the people whose efforts and motivation determine your success or failure. To be promoted, you must succeed at your current position and you can not succeed at your current position without the efforts of the people who work for

you.

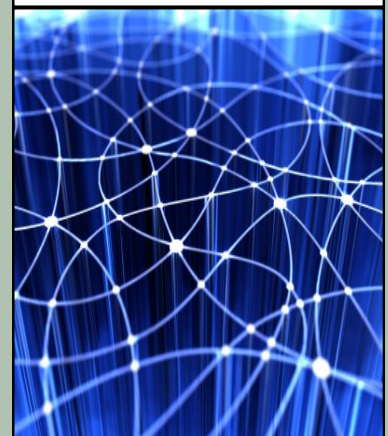
In addition to simply doing their work, or even doing it well so you look good, your employees are also a good networking source. Many employees know other employees in other departments and they all talk. Some may even know other managers. The conversations your employees have with these other people can have a direct impact on your advancement within the company. Imagine if one of your employees tells a friend in the company, "My boss is a real jerk. He doesn't know what he's doing and doesn't listen". A different employee says of his boss, "I'd hate to lose her as my boss, but she'd be great in the VP spot". Which person do you think is more likely to get promoted?

Your peers are competing with you for promotion, but they are

also critical to your success. The higher you go in your career the more your success will depend on your ability to work across functional lines. That means you need to establish good working relationships with your peers. Whether your peers help you out of friendship, self interest, or fear doesn't really matter, but guess which one is the most dependable.

Ultimately, your selection for promotion to a higher level depends on your boss or someone higher in the organization. The more this senior executive thinks of your capabilities and your style, the more likely you are to get promoted.

**How To Network Successfully**  
Some networks are built on fear, suspicion, intrigue and back stabbing. These can work, of course, and are the basis for what we



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usually refer to as "office politics".

Other networks are based on meeting each others' needs and wants. When the different members of such mutual benefit networks get some benefit out of the network they will continue to work to support each other and advance the success of the members of the network - at least until it interferes with their own needs.

Finally, there are networks of friends. They do what they can to help each other, without any concerns for their own benefit, just because they are friends.

There are two things you need to be aware of as you build your networks at work:

Most networks are a blend of all three types: politics, mutual benefit, and friends and it is critically important to know which one(s) make up any of your networks.

**Types of Successful Networks**  
You can build your network based on any of the three types, depending on your personal style and preferences. If you are comfortable in the back-stabbing world of office politics, if you excel at blind-siding others, if you want to get ahead by shoving others aside go for it. It is a method that has worked for many people in the past and undoubtedly will continue to work.

If you feel more comfortable in a

world where peers treat each other as professionals and work together for mutual benefit until the end then that should be the type of network you build.

Get to know your peers.  
Figure out what they need to succeed.

Help them be more successful in their job.

Let them know what you need.  
Be professional and collegiate.  
And recognize that in the end you may have to watch out for yourself.

If you prefer to build friendships and to depend on those friends at work as your network, then that is the type of network you should build. It is the most secure network, the most dependable network, but the one that takes the longest to build.

Cultivate friends at work as you do elsewhere.

Earn their trust and friendship.

Trust them and be friends.

Be open and candid about what you need and want in your career.

Ask them for their help and advice in getting ahead.

And be prepared to support one of them who may get promoted ahead of you.

## **Real Networking Success**

Let me share with you my choice of business network. It may not work for you and perhaps I could have done better with a different system.

I was in my third job before I won a corporate MVP award. I was 40 before I became a VP. I have not yet been CEO of a multi-national

conglomerate. But in the end, I'm happy with my career success. It came from my hard work and talent and not from my ability to step on others. It was build on my ability to network; to successfully communicate with people at all levels as I advanced up the corporate ladder.

I have always built my networks first as mutually beneficial professional networks. But over time, my peers, my bosses, and my employees have become more than that. Many of them have become friends with whom I have worked at different companies. Some are very good friends, even beyond the work world. I depend on this network, based on mutual respect and friendship, when I need advice. I call on them when I have a problem. If I need a recommendation regarding a new employee, I can usually run it past one of them or their networks. When I need a connection into a hiring manager, my network of peers/friends can usually find me that connection.

## **Bottom Line**

Build whatever type of network or combination of type will work best for you:

Political  
Mutual benefit or  
Friends.

Invest the time in your network to make it work for you. You can not get ahead without other people. Figure out how you want them to be involved in your success and go for it. And good luck.

**By F. John Reh**