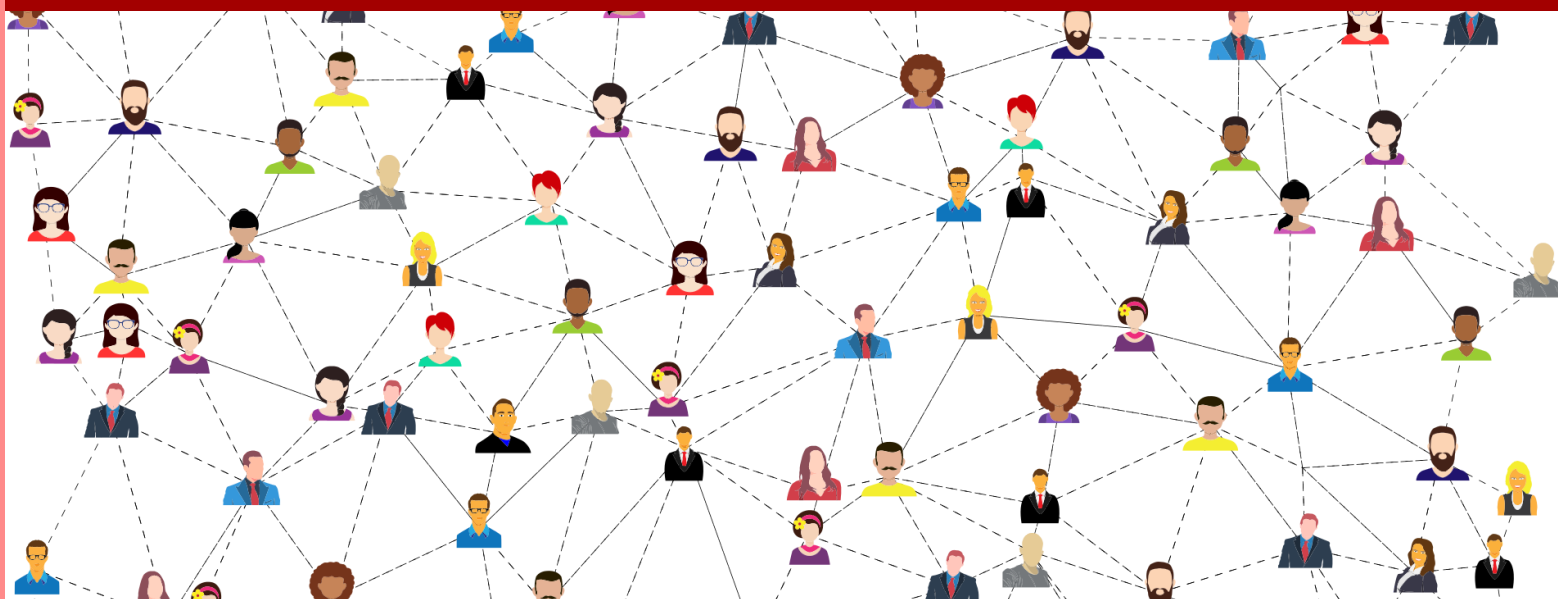




Building on Your Management Skills: Networking



**“Your network is your net worth.”
–Porter Gale**

Most young professionals are likely to be familiar with the power of networking. We are often pushed at the start of our careers to go out and network as much as possible. In many cases, networking provides us with the connections needed to open doors to new and exciting career opportunities. Networking may even serve as a safety net for those who would like to transition their careers into new roles, fields, or industries. Though one common mistake that many professionals make once they begin their new careers is neglecting to maintain and continue building their networks. It’s understandable, we get busy; work schedules might become too hectic, there might be more urgent tasks on our to-do lists, or perhaps networking just might not feel as important anymore. Regardless, in spite of our busy schedules, networking remains vital to forward-thinking leadership.



While networking is important for all professionals, it should be considered a priority for those who are interested in leadership roles. Leaders utilize their networks to identify career opportunities, build their teams, achieve goals, leverage new ideas, stay on top of industry trends, and much more. Developing and maintaining strong professional networks culminates into an unlimited pool of resources containing support, feedback, and information valuable to promote career and business growth. Although cultivating robust professional networks takes much time and effort, think of it as an investment; the payoff depends on what you put into it.



Building Your Network

- 1. Start with your current contacts.** While you work on expanding your network, foster the relationships that you've already acquired. Ask them for new contacts, insight on the industry, or the latest available opportunities.
- 2. Build connections within your organization.** This is crucial for aspiring leaders. Establish new contacts with others in the organization to introduce new opportunities. Get involved outside of your department, find a mentor, or simply just grab lunch with your colleagues.
- 3. Take advantage of professional associations, conferences, and events.** Attending business conferences and events are great opportunities to meet new people in the industry. Professional associations typically host luncheons, workshops, and other events to encourage networking. Taking advantage of these resources could increase your professional contacts significantly.
- 4. Embrace social media.** LinkedIn is the leading social network for job seekers, professionals, and businesses, however, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social platforms are also extremely useful.
- 5. Get involved in your community.** Volunteer, become a mentor, or organize your own event. Not only will others benefit from your involvement, but you'll also benefit from them.



Bottom line: A great leader has a great network. Your connections will become your assets and vice versa. In today's competitive environment, networking is an essential and powerful tool to help you stand out. Go out and network to become the leader you aspire to be.