

Building Effective Networks

with **Herminia Ibarra**, Professor of Organizational Behavior, INSEAD Business School

1. REFLECT *(First 10 minutes)*

Each person, write about your experience.

What do your networks currently look like? Do you have mostly “just like me” convenience networks? Do you have valuable “weak ties” in your network?

What challenges do you face when cultivating your networks? How might you address these challenges?

2. SHARE *(For the next 10 minutes)*

Now pair up. Share with your partner your reflections on your networks. What are the strengths of your current networks? What challenges are you facing? What, if anything, holds you back from forming the kinds of networks you would like to have? Mention which strategies could help you navigate these challenges? *After 5 minutes, switch and let your partner share. Stick to the allotted time so everyone gets a turn.*

3. DISCUSS *(For the next 15 minutes, as a group)*

Each person, share one key discovery or reflection from this education module. What resonated with you (or not) based on your personal background and identity?

If time permits, select one concept from this education module you like to discuss further. Then have group members share 1) How this concept relates to the challenges they face at work, and 2) Strategies they have used to address these challenges. *For this discussion, share experiences, do not give advice.*

4. ACTION *(For the final 10 minutes)*

Pick One Action you will do after the meeting. Imagine who, what, where, and when it will happen. Each person, share the One Action with the group. Plan to report back at the next meeting.

One Action:

Building Effective Networks

Key Take-Aways

Networks enable you to offer more and have more impact.

A network is a set of relationships that you depend on to get things done to get ahead in your career and to develop professionally.

“Just Like Me” convenience networks are not the most effective

— we need a diversity of ideas, inputs, information, and resources.

There is strength in “weak ties” — in our relationships with people that we don’t know that well or that we don’t see very often.

THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF NETWORKS:

- **Operational** — relationships with people at work that allow you to get today’s work done
- **Personal** — relationships of your choosing, people you like to hang out with informally
- **Strategic** — (most important network for career advancement) relationships that help you envision your future, sell your ideas, and get the information and resources you need

GREAT STRATEGIC NETWORKS ARE:

- **Broad** — connected to a diverse range of people
- **Connective** — linked or bridged across people and groups that would not otherwise connect
- **Dynamic** — responsive and adaptive, growing as you grow

Building a strong strategic network is challenging for anybody but it can be particularly challenging for women, especially in male-dominated organizations and fields

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING EFFECTIVE NETWORKS

- **Engage** in activities both inside and outside your organization
- **Connect** through people you already know
- **Focus** on and develop the value you bring to your network
- **Prioritize** and invest in a few activities — favor active over passive networking

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