

“Build an Internal Network Can Be Valuable”



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Networking is a necessary aspect of maintaining a thriving career, and most people think of only building a network outside of their own workplace. Perhaps, however, we are overlooking the obvious: how well have you networked to build quality relationships within your own organization? We are all inter-dependent on one another to be able to do a good job, yet rarely do we take the time to focus on building and enhancing co-worker relationships as a way that can enhance our job productivity and work satisfaction.

Consider these strategies to build an internal network within the company you work for:

- Invite a new co-worker to lunch. Challenge yourself especially with getting to know someone with whom you may not immediately feel something in common. Someone older, younger, ethnically different, male or female or with a different job function than yours will usually offer an interestingly different perspective. You need not share personal information unless it is comfortable to do so, but do offer to be a resource to the new person. They will feel appreciative, and you may discover a new professional ally, or even a friend.
- Approach someone you do not know very well, but with whom you need to regularly interact as a part of your job to explore ways to work better together. For instance, sales people and customer service people depend on one another, and their jobs affect one another, yet they do not always take time to share perspectives or find ways that they might be able to help one another to better support their customers. Taking time to dialogue about each other's challenges can create a better understanding and enhance the working relationship.
- Take a few minutes before or after a meeting to get to know a "kindred spirit" a little better. Find something positive that you have observed, and use it as an opening: "Justin, I liked your idea at the meeting today, even though not everyone saw the value in it. Perhaps we could take some time later this week to discuss it further." Even if your discussion does not change his situation, the process of dialogue will have given both of you the opportunity to get to know one another better, and perhaps create a working alliance.
- Mend fences at work. Approach someone that you need to work with to get your job done who does not always make your life easy. No one needs the extra stress it causes and doing so might clear the air by dispelling assumptions and frustrations for both parties. "Dianna, I know we get frustrated with one another sometimes, and both of our jobs are pressure-cookers. I'm wondering if we might have a cup of coffee before work one day to see if there is a better way for us to work together..." While the exact outcome that you desire may not come to fruition, your outreach efforts alone will help to break down the barriers and may set the stage for subsequent productive dialogues.

Networking inside your own organization can build or re-ignite relationships that will not only make your job easier, it can reduce friction and stress, and maybe even help you to avoid leaving a job situation that you otherwise enjoy.

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