

How Leaders Create and Use Networks

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The diverse mix of personal contacts and a rich network of relationships is one of the leadership practices that differentiates successful leaders from the rest.

Ibarra and Hunter recommend building three types of networks:

- Operational – people you need to accomplish your assigned, routine tasks
- Personal – kindred spirits outside your organisation who can help you with personal advancement
- Strategic – people outside your control who will enable you reach key organisational objectives

You need all three types of networks but to really succeed you must master strategic networking – by interacting regularly with people who can open your eyes to new business opportunities and help you capitalise on them.

	Operational	Personal	Strategic
Network's Purpose	Getting work done efficiently	Develop professional skills through coaching and mentoring; exchange important referrals and needed outside information	Figure out future priorities and challenges; get stakeholder support for them
How to find network members	Identify individuals who can block or support a project	Participate in professional associations, alumni groups, clubs, and personal-interest communities	Identify lateral and vertical relationships with other functional and business unit managers—people outside your immediate control—who can help you determine how your role and contribution fit into the overall picture

¹ HBR January 2007