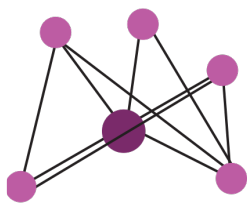




Which type of networker are you?

A look at your networks

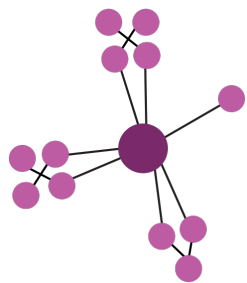
King identifies three kinds of networks people develop based on whether they're expansionists, brokers or conveners. Some people may have elements of all three.



Conveners

These people have strong ties but there are not that many of them. Their networks are comfortable and safe. Conveners collaborate well and share knowledge and sensitive information. Relationships have high trust and help build resilience. But they can also be cartel-like, exclusive and lack diversity. You stick to who you know and what you know.

Conveners may fear social rejection, favour certainty and avoid risk.

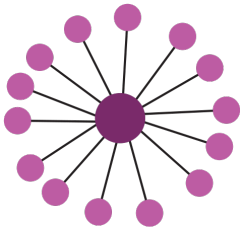


Brokers

Brokers are rare. They have diverse networks that span what sociologist, Ron Burt, calls structural holes. They know people in IT, audit and marketing. King: "Employees who bridge structural holes are likely to receive positive outcomes such as favourable job evaluations, raises, bonuses and early promotions." But why? They're more creative, because they're exposed to so many different world views. And this research has been repeated over and over again.

Most people, particularly conveners, focus on their own world. Hamel and others talk about finding creative ideas at the edge, not the mainstream. That's where brokers are.

But there are two sides to brokering. You can use brokering for positive and co-operative purposes that benefit a whole group or organisation. Or you can take an arbitrage approach. This means you take advantage of your brokering position to control information and ideas. This benefits the broker and gives them power.



Expansionists

As the name suggests, expansionists know far more people than the average person. Super expansionists can know 6,000 or more. Why? Because they're popular, likeable, confident, have status and are generous. They have social intelligence, can read others and listen deeply. And using these skills in a large network means you find out about more opportunities and offer social support.

King: "Expansionists are extraordinarily good at being able to read others. They excel in one-to-one interactions and understand how to make an instant connection."

Which one of these three are you?

Three different network types

Operational

These are people you network with at work to get today's work done.

Personal

Family and friends are key people here. You like to hang out with them.

Strategic

These people are internal and external. Barra says they have three characteristics:

- **Broad** - all different kinds of people. They're not just like you.
- **Connective** - people you can connect with via the people you know already
- **Dynamic** - you grow your network as you grow. You're not just networking with the same people year after year. You're finding out new information from new people. They may be different parts of your organisation, different organisations and different professions and industries. They may be more senior or junior to you.

Think about growing your dynamic network. Who do you know now who could connect you with someone new to be part of your dynamic network?

Remember the strength of weak ties

The classic study by Granovetter (1973) distinguishes between strong and weak ties. Strong ones are family, partners and close friends. Weak ones are further away: friends of friends, acquaintances, former class mates, etc. The idea is you learn more and get more opportunities from the weak ties. The strong ties know the same people you know and live in the same environment. The weak ties open more doors for job opportunities and a diverse set of ideas and information. They're outside your social bubble.

You'll find research upon research supporting and disputing this theory. Hyon (2023) *The results empirically validated the theory that weak ties cause increased job mobility*. But there's a twist.

The weakest ties weren't the best at increasing job mobility. Rather, moderately weak ties increased job mobility and job transmissions the most. The strongest ties affected job mobility the least.

Networking: the gender difference

Barra's research highlights an interesting gender difference.

Men's work and personal networks tend to overlap. They work with another male colleague. Then, they have a beer after work with them, play tennis with them and have weekend BBQs with them.

Women's work and personal networks overlap far less, particularly when they have children. They have a work network and then a different personal network around schools, day cares, their kids' friends' Mums, etc. And they'll be time poor. So, which relationships and networks to prioritise? Often the personal ones win out.

Why network?

Here are some clear advantages:

Generate new ideas	Gain information	Get general support
Expand your influence	Get things done	Get ahead
Develop professionally	Keep up to date with changes	Offer your ideas
Impact the issues affecting your organisation or sector	Build your brand	Find out about opportunities
Keep your finger on the pulse	Be aware of talent	Get help in a crisis

Getting ready to network

Some people think of networking as distasteful and a bit phony. Others fear not being liked or have a limited sense of self-worth. One study (Casciaro, Gino and Kouchaki, 2016) found people with power found networking less distasteful. Those with less power and authority felt they had nothing to offer and found it harder. This is where you need a mindset shift.

Change your mindset

Focus on what you can give and what you can learn, even if you see yourself as not very powerful. If you stick to people who are "just like me" you're unlikely to grow a dynamic network.

You can give your:

- expertise
- fresh thinking
- what's really going on at the coal face
- observations.

And you can also focus on less tangible things such as gratitude and recognition. Most people like to be thanked or recognised for their actions, behaviours or reputation.

Also think about what you can learn. Be curious. What can you get to know about them and what can they get to know about you?

What can you offer others?



Find common ground

This is such a basic. What interests do you have in common? What similar experiences have you had? What common values do you hold?

Learn one thing about a person and make sure they learn one thing about you. Then find some common ground.

Focus on a higher purpose

What would help your team? What would help your customers? What would help your organisation? It doesn't have to be about you. If you can link our networking to a higher goal, it'll help shift your mindset. And remember: most people feel good about helping.

Shared activities matter

Small talk won't build deep connections. Shared activities do. These can be work projects, sports clubs, school boards, voluntary organisations – anything that brings people together over time.

They either share the same activity or bring different skills to the same activity.



Tap into the brokers

Every organisation has people who span those structural holes. They know who's who and can connect you.

Who are these key people in your sector or organisation?

Engage in deep talk, not small talk

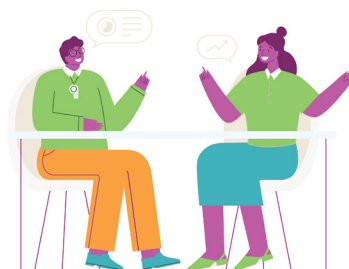
Closing the mirror neuron gap: it's all about connecting

We all have mirror neurons in our brains—in our prefrontal cortices to be exact. They allow us to feel what others are feeling. They're like our empathy neurons. They cause us to care for others.

But look at them from the angle of connecting with others. The person or people you want to connect with are constantly mirroring the world – sending out messages saying: *I want your approval and for you to tune into what I'm feeling*. Each time someone puts something out there, they're really saying: *I'm hungry for you to reciprocate and feel what I'm feeling*. If that hunger isn't satisfied, we have a mirror neuron gap.

If we recognise what others are feeling, we're closing the mirror neuron gap. Then it keeps going. When we mirror what another person feels, they're wired to mirror you in return.

That's what builds a connection.



Four levels of connection

This is a simple way of understanding how we connect:

1. Politeness
2. Exchanging facts
3. Sharing emotions
4. Reaching intimacy



And it's at the last two levels that really connect – you're closing each other's mirror neuron gaps.

Getting started

Here are some simple conversation starts to get going with follow-up questions. Follow-up questions are the most powerful of all question types.

Initial

What do you do?	How did you come to be here?	What's your current role?
Have you been to any these events before?	Who are you with?	How do you spend your time when...

Follow up

- What do you enjoy most about your role?
- What's your biggest challenge at the moment?
- What satisfies you in your role?
- What energises and excites you?
- Where do you (and / or your organisation) add value?
- What led you to where you are now?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What's the best career advice / overall advice you've been given?
- What's top of mind right now?
- What's the next thing you can cross off from your career / general bucket list?
- What's been the highlight of your week / last month?
- What challenges are you grappling with?
- What's going well?
- What support would help you right now?
- What's the climate like at ...?
- Tell me more about...

Listening makes pain go away

Clinical trials have found listening reduces physical pain. Yet we're poor listeners, but we think we're not. Accenture conducted an extensive listening survey and found 96% of respondents thought they were good listeners: a positive illusion.

Nichols and Stevens concluded: *"If we define the good listener as one giving full attention to the listener, first-grade children are the best listeners of all."* They were listening 90% of the time. Why? It seems counter-intuitive. The key to their listening success was open-mindedness. Younger minds are more open, flexible and exploratory.

Alison Gopnik from Berkeley adds her voice: Kids are *"less biased by their existing knowledge."*



We know about the listening basics: nodding, smiling, asking open-ended questions, probing and paraphrasing. But is this enough? Let's break listening down as follows:

Cognitive

Hearing and remembering – Yes, I understand

Behavioural

Nodding, smiling, eye contact, etc. – I get it

Meaning and emotion

Picking up all the signals – I value you

Deep listening

No judgment



Eye contact matters

There are cultural issues here. So, this is taking a Western view.

What's the ultimate length of eye contact? When you're connecting with someone new, about three seconds seems comfortable.

And listeners are two/three times more likely to make eye contact than speakers. Intimate topics may lead to less eye contact and not surprisingly people who are co-operating make more eye contact than those who are competing.



Build trust

$$\text{Trustworthiness} = \frac{\text{Credibility + Reliability + Intimacy}}{\text{Self Orientation}}$$

Anton Chekhov: "You must trust and believe in people, or life becomes impossible." King argues that rather than working out who to trust and then being vulnerable with them, we have to be vulnerable to build the trust.

More intimate questions

Here's a question that will help you get to the intimacy level:

What's it like being you today?

36 questions that will connect you with someone and fall in love with them

Psychologist, Arthur Aron with others, devised 36 questions, broken into three sets, with each set more revealing than the previous one. Aron: "One key pattern associated with the development of a close relationship among peers is sustained, escalating, reciprocal, personal self-disclosure."

In short: vulnerability, a key part of building trust.

[Here's a link to the full 36.](#)

And here's a sample:

Set 1

What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?

For what in your life do you feel most grateful?

If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?

Set 2

Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time?
Why haven't you done it?

What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?

What is your most treasured memory?

Set 3

Make three true "we" statements. For instance,
"We are both in this room feeling ..."

When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?

What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?

The case for face-to-face interactions

University of Virginia neuroscientist, James Coan: *"The brain processes all manner of information more efficiently in the presence of other people, even if they are six feet away, than it does while alone, or while engaging with someone on a screen or a phone...It's a biological principle called the economy of action. The brain wants to do something at the lowest cost possible, and being with others lowers the cost of almost everything it does."*

Our bodies respond to high-quality interaction

Also our bodies respond physically when we're in high-quality interactions. Specifically, our blood pressure lowers, our heart rates slow and oxytocin is released. We can feel a high-quality connection.

Touch increases positive perceptions

Touch is overwhelmingly powerful to connect and add to our social chemistry. When you touch someone – appropriately of course – our stress reduces, blood pressure lowers and our heart rate slows. Hugs and handshakes can boost our immune systems and creates synchrony between people.

Touchers are considered more friendly, sincere, agreeable and kind.

So what is an appropriate touch? According to neuroscience it's warm skin, moderate pressure and moving at one inch per second.



Engage in deep talk with another person.



Two key points about our networking mindset

Reciprocity is fundamental

A fundamental building block of connecting and social chemistry is still reciprocity. It's our social exchange currency. Sociologist, Howard Becker, says we should be renamed Homo reciprocus. Give rather than expect to receive.

MRI scans show when we give, the same reward-processing areas of our brains are activated as when we eat ice cream or receive money.

People like you more than you think

We can often experience a liking gap. We're so concerned about how we come across and are so self-conscious that we miss positive signals. And after an interaction we can be pessimistic about how we came across. To add to this, we then compare ourselves to expansionists and feel even worse.

And it's not a question of extraversion versus introversion. It's more about having a growth mindset and being self-aware.

King: "The truth is that people like us more than we think they do."



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