**Knowledge capsule**

**NETWORKING**

**Introduction**

Networking means "working over a network". The concept comes from IT, where a network consists of a set of computers and management programs that are connected together for the purpose of sharing resources and exchanging information. Similarly, among humans networking is the exchange of knowledge between two or more people, to facilitate the processes of work.

Imagine everybody on earth could share human knowledge with the maximum possible freedom and accessibility” Jimmy Wales (Wikipedia founder)

In the world of business, contacts have always been used as a means of communication and obtaining details. Through this, recruitment managers saw the potential for hiring new candidates. Similarly, jobs are frequently advertised by word-of-mouth and contacts are therefore considered to be a valid job-hunting channel.

Networking though is not simply knowing people and getting what you can out of them; it is also helping them to be successful too. It means being generous with the time that you give to other people and establishing relationships on the basis of "give and take". Thus, more than a way of working, some people consider it to be a general philosophy and extrapolate it to all aspects of their life.

In short, networking is a work-related tool that can be used as part of the process of professional improvement, as a way of learning about the job market and even as a direct channel for finding work.

**Networking: a key part in professional development processes.**

**Why is networking so important for professional development?** Having good relationships with the people you work with is essential for the process of professional improvement - whether this relates to doing things better or changing job or industry. Furthermore, knowing people outside your immediate work environment helps expand your perspective of what you do, and what you could do, professionally, learning and staying up-to-date with new subjects, technologies and ways of working as well as locating resources and people that may be of help in your career development.

The best professionals, beyond using their technical or personal competencies according to each situation, know how to apply these effectively, and mix and match them to achieve their objectives. In other words, they make the most of their competencies because they are able to balance the specific knowledge they have of their working area with the relationship that they have with their environment.

**What type of networking is there?** There are basically two different types of methods for establishing and maintaining contact:
Physical networking: This is the most common type of networking given that it occurs naturally. We all interact face-to-face with people that we meet in our daily lives.

Virtual networking: This form of networking has developed as a result of new technologies being incorporated into our daily lives. This can be done by telephone, by sending e-mails to contacts, or by taking part in web 2.0 applications, such as wikis, forums, virtual communities and so on.

In developing relationships with other people, most of us combine the two methods. The factors that determine which channel of communication is selected for each situation is dictated more by physical (time and distance) and social (level of relationship and trust) factors rather than psychological matters (the person’s communication style).

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| Physical networking | - Enables the message being communicated to be backed up by non-verbal communication  
                         - Closer and more natural  
                         - The other person's reactions are seen immediately | - Requires finding the right time and place  
                                                                             - Requires a proactive attitude and social skills |
| Virtual networking | - The ability to communicate anywhere and at any time  
                         - Focus on the message to be communicated  
                         - Enables contact with people that we would not otherwise know | - Lack of non-verbal communication to back up the message (can lead to misunderstandings)  
                                                                                - Requires technological devices (telephone, computer, etc)  
                                                                                - Communication may be slow and may not even go in both directions |

Web 2.0 and the virtual networking revolution

What is it and how does it form digital identity? Everything on the internet about a person forms part of their profile and their virtual or digital identity. Many people back up their digital identity with a blog in which they write articles on topics that they are interested in or they specialise in. In today’s economic situation, we are even seeing many unemployed people setting up blogs and virtual communities to share their previous experiences as well as provide solutions and advice on getting back into work.

Thus, on the one hand, websites with blogs, digital CVs and portfolios can be used to publicise oneself and become more visible within the job market. On the other hand, there are specific applications for
creating and maintaining contacts, known as social networks. These have a double aspect: publicise yourself but also extend your network of contacts.

All of these tools can be used effectively to provide good positioning of a person's digital identity through personal marketing strategies. Equally they can work against the person and generate a bad digital reputation.

**Why are social networks so important on the internet?** Beyond being an exceptional way of meeting different people, social networks can be used as a source of information given that they offer access to details and knowledge of the members of the network. They enable you to find out more about the companies, the profiles of the people that work for them, and trends within the market, through instant or electronic messaging services, forums and debating groups, newsletters, publication of events and other applications used for social interaction.

The main value of these social networks is based on their capacity to expand your network of contacts through your contacts' contacts. This exponential factor demonstrates what is known as the theory of six degrees of separation. According to this theory, any two people anywhere on the planet are separated by less than five people that know each other.

Today, these networks have become HR databases, which companies have started using to learn more about professionals and attract them. **These days almost all recruitment consultants use this resource for finding new candidates and/or checking their profile.** Without going into more detail, this is a tool that is revolutionising the recruitment process.

New internet-based social networks are cropping up every day and therefore it's important to find the ones that are of most interest to you. It also means watching out for new sites. There are generic social networks with specific groups of interests as well as specific social networks. Examples include:
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<td><a href="http://www.linkedin.es">www.linkedin.es</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.tuenti.com">www.tuenti.com</a></td>
<td>Personal</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.bytepr.com">www.bytepr.com</a></td>
<td>Professional</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>Recent graduates</td>
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<td>Photography</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>Audiovisual</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.rayleague.com">www.rayleague.com</a></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional football</td>
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<td>PR, advertising, marketing and communication</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.hosteltur.com">www.hosteltur.com</a></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Tourism and hotels</td>
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Twitter deserves special mention. It is a micro-blogging tool that has a range of applications for finding offers of work – all of which are in English. It is based on mobile telephone technology, given that the messages that can be sent are up to a maximum of 140 characters. However, they are published openly, meaning that anybody connected to the website can read the messages. The objective is to get messages followed by as many “followers” as possible.

Today, Twitter is one of the most heavily used personal marketing and digital positioning Web 2.0 tools.

Your network of contacts: how to implement a networking action plan

What skills do you need for networking? Given that it is done by human beings in a social setting, all networking involves a range of psychological aspects that are related to a person’s mood, attitudes and principles. These have a direct impact on the development of social skills. Therefore it is as important to review them as it is to find the right moment to establish and maintain contacts.

Competencies related to emotional intelligence also deserve special attention. These are decisive in how we relate to other people. These competencies are grouped into five areas:\(^1\):

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\(^1\) Classification by Daniel Goleman in the book “Working with emotional intelligence” (see bibliography).
What are the general recommendations when networking? Four stages can be defined in the process of developing a network of contacts: classifying contacts; meeting people; contacting professionals within the sector that you are interested in strategically; and maintaining and exploiting contacts.

For each of these, there is a series of basic tips to get the most out of your network of contacts, and also expand it.

1st stage: Classify contacts.

- Find the right format to collect the more important details about your contacts. On this, new technologies enable you to store this information on PCs and electronic mobile devices (mobile telephones, PDAs etc) With regard to software, there are online utilities that make it easier to compile and expand the details relating to your contacts – such as social networks and similar applications.

- Classify the contacts according to the most useful variable for you: type of contact (personal or professional), economic sector, field of contact (gym, university, work) etc. To recover former contacts and create new ones, you can find points of interaction between people that cross over more than one of these areas.

- Improve the descriptions for your contacts with keywords and meta tags) so that it is easier to find them and recall them when you need to.
Have a clear contacts map based on relationship levels.

2nd stage: Make new contacts.

- Be open, accessible and confident in yourself. If you are not feeling like that, it's better to leave it for another day. It is better to cancel an interview (with a company or contact) than go without being in the best frame of mind.

- Prepare a quick presentation of who you are and what you want to do – that is, a good elevator pitch.

- Seek out contacts that are very active in terms of networking; normally, they are people who connect naturally.

- Compile as much information as possible about your contacts: name and surname, contact details, place of work, company, role and responsibilities, training and experience, projects that they work on, etc.

- Make sure that you know your contacts well: make time to talk to them and shown interest in them – both through formal questions, for example what they do, where they work etc) and informal questions, for example about their family, holidays and so on).

- Remember specific details about your contacts: professional (customers, projects that they are working on etc) and personal (birthday, where they live, etc). Any information that helps you establish a conversation related to their interests.

3rd stage: Contact professionals from your industry or field, in a strategic way.

- Ask people that you know about other people they know who work in the industry or professional field that you are interested in.

- Attend events held within your industry or professional area: trade fairs, round tables, conferences etc.

- Become a member of professional associations and colleges, unions and working groups.

- Participate in groups or forums within the social networks and virtual communities.

- Watch out for changes taking place around you as well as new trends in your industry.

- Create a list of target companies where you would like to work.

- Find people who work or have experience in your industry, follow what they do, contact them and let them know who you are and what you are interested in.

- Build relationships with professionals who do your job in other companies.
4th stage: Maintain and exploit your contacts

✓ Update your contacts continually.
✓ Share your knowledge and make the most of other people. Think about the interests of the other party in this win-win relationship.
✓ Use social network and Web 2.0 applications mainly at the start and end of the day, which is when most people connect.
✓ When choosing your networking tools, think about how you will combine different platforms to find and maintain the contacts that match your objective.
✓ Take advantage of any opportunity to do something nice for your contacts and build your appeal among them.
✓ Involve others in conversations and social situations.
✓ Actively participate in social events.
✓ Connect people from different environments that you think could get on with each other.
✓ Request contributions, help and suggestions from other people and offer yours.

At Barcelona Activa - Human Capital, we offer tools to help you implement your networking action plan. Look up articles, books, documents, multimedia applications and companies on our intranet and register for networking activities from the professional development programme.

Conclusions

✓ Networking has no limits in terms of space or time. Our network of contacts can range from our more immediate environment (family, neighbours, colleagues and former work and study colleagues, friends and acquaintances) to people that have no direct connection with us. However, it requires a continual investment in time and effort. Just as human capital steadily develops through a person’s training and experience, social capital can also grow on a daily basis if you constantly feed it.

✓ Actively participating in social networks and the internet enables you to demonstrate your knowledge and contribute to strengthening your digital identity. It is not essential to find work but it helps to make you more visible and position you in the job market. In short, it can set your candidacy apart from other people with similar profiles.

✓ Networking, however is not just an important tool for finding work; it has become a key aspect in career development. It helps you to promote your personal brand and knowledge of the context that you are working in and enables you to keep up-to-date and learn through other people. Networking activities help you get the most out of your human capital and maximise the opportunities for professional success.
Key concepts

Web 2.0: Term used to refer to the second-generation in the history of the development of web technology, based on communities of users and a special range of services that encourage interaction and flexible and efficient exchange of information between users. Web 2.0 is also known as "social web" due to its collaborative focus and social construction.

Social networks: These are web applications that enable content to be shared, interact and create communities and groups based on shared interests.

Blog: This is part of the internet that chronologically brings together articles ("posts") by one or several authors. Interaction takes place when readers leave comments and the author replies publicly, creating a kind of dialogue. The use or theme of each blog varies; there are personal, journalist, business and education related blogs.

Digital identity: The trail that a person leaves on the internet, made up of the set of details that can be found on social networks of which they are members, blogs and/or any other website that refers to the person.

Digital reputation: Social opinion of the person based on the image reflected on the internet and digital media.

Elevator pitch or elevator speech: American concept for entrepreneurs that is based on the idea of explaining their business or professional skill set during a conversation that normally takes place in a lift – that is, in a period of approximately 60 seconds.

Personal marketing: This is the application of marketing techniques to a person, who is treated as a "product". Enables the person to convey the image of who they want to be and achieve the goals that each sets for him or herself. We therefore talk of "personal brand" and "personal branding", as something that differentiates one person from others.

Human capital: Professional potential of a person. This is based on knowledge, experience and key competencies; it can be developed through ongoing training and updating.

Key competencies: Competencies cover a range of observable behaviours including: knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that need to be applied to a job in order for it to be done with the right level of effectiveness. It is not therefore sufficient simply to have the understanding needed to do a job (knowledge); the successful applicant must also be capable of applying this knowledge (knowing how to do it) and have the right attitude to do it (wanting to do it).

Emotional intelligence: The ability to recognise and handle one's own feelings as well as those of others. The term was popularised by Daniel Goleman in his book "Emotional Intelligence", published in 1995. He said that emotional intelligence can be organised into five main skill areas: understanding
one’s own emotions and feelings, managing them, recognising them, creating self-motivation and managing relationships.

**6 degrees of separation:** Theory that says that any person is connected to any other person through a chain of fewer than five people who know each other. According to this theory, any person has 100 first degree contacts, which can multiply to 10,000 contacts if each of his or her direct contact only one of his contacts. Factorially, this network can reach more than 1 billion contacts at the sixth level, meaning that we can all contact almost any other person on the planet.

**Bibliography**


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**Digital identity and social wealth.** Digital article.

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[http://www.wcp.es/art2_red_social_2part.htm](http://www.wcp.es/art2_red_social_2part.htm)

**Design your “Twitter Pitch” and get ready to find work.** Digital article.

Post about how to put together a summary of your profile and what you are looking for when using on Twitter. Although these tips are applicable to any other networking activity.


**Google yourself before you are Googled.** Digital article.
Article about the importance of online reputation for recruiters.
http://www.expansionyempleo.com/2010/05/05/opinion/1273057261.html

**The eight habits of highly effective bloggers.** Digital article.
Article about the habits that a blogger needs to be highly effective and even turn their blogs into a source of income.
http://muypymes.com/marketing/comunicacion/4777-los8-habitos-del-blogger-altamente-efectivo.html

**Web 2.0 and networking, essential for finding work.** Digital article.
Article that brings together the main contributions made by different experts during the session "Improve your career through networking" organised by Porta22 in collaboration with XING and AERC.

**Key things you need to do to avoid losing control of your social network**. Digital article.
Tips to bear in mind when using internet-based social networks.
http://www.expansionyempleo.com/2009/06/05/desarrollo_de_carrera/1244218502.html

**Plaxo.com**. Useful link.
Online application that synchronises social networks with e-mail and automatically updates details’ contacts and what they have published on the internet.
http://www.plaxo.com

**Networking Activo magazine**. Digital magazine.
Complimentary to the social network and blog Networking Activo; this is a publication that covers all types of news, events and articles about networking.
http://revista.networkingactivo.com/

**TwitterJobSearch.com**. Useful link.
Search engine for job adverts using Twitter. Search for potential work based on keywords and filter results by date, salary and required skills.
http://www.twitterjobsearch.com

**Jobsket.es**. Useful link.
Website that combines employment portals and social networks. Its main appeal is that when candidates publish their CV, the value of their profile can be calculated, based on parameters such as the companies that they have worked at, their experience, and their professional skills competencies.
http://www.jobsket.es
Webography for Human Capital

We offer a number of options within the Human Capital website to provide you with more information on networking:

- Person > Key competencies
- Tools > Job-hunting channels
- Market > Economic Sectors > (Choose sector)

Use the SEARCH FACILITY for a more complete list of resources: books, articles and useful links. It's very easy - simply open up SEARCH and enter a keyword.