

# Confessions of an Amateur Networker



Of all the pharmaceutically-induced memories at MDI, some memories are still quite vivid. One of those for me is that of the networker- the one person in our batch whose currency of gossip would've made him/her batch's millionaire. How do you zero in on him/her. Let me ask you a question:

- Their linked in profile has 500 (dare I say a 1,000) names, from their neighborhood PCO operator to the mailroom assistant in their last office.
- When asked who are you in touch with? They say "not too many people" and then rattle of the entire roll call from xxPG01 to xxPG137 in one long winding sentence
- Have two boxes full of visiting cards after every alumni night /seminar/conference and an ever-burgeoning rolodex
- Have a personal database of salary-grade-title, etc., of everyone in their own, their senior and their junior batches and regularly refer to reference the jumps their batchmates have made (announced in the "moved on" mail on mdijfk) ... you get the idea... this is what is called as the networking ass%#%#!. This piece is not about him/her/it (whatever you prefer to call them). The networking ass%#%# is the image that most people have when they hear the word networking- many of them do not know the first thing about creating relationships.

In reality I started building my network of friends, supporters and well-wishers much later than I should have. Partly because of my ignorance about how powerfully networks worked, partly because I echoed Groucho Marx's views I wouldn't join any club that would have me as a member. I always thought networks were for the networking ass%#%#- till I used one. Since it was and is still very hard for me,

I thought I'll share views that I have compiled from all the people who helped me start out, A networking FAQs (if you will).

## Why have a network?

Usually (and not in all cases), selflessness is the first casualty of competitive exams, relative grading. There was a mistaken self belief that I carried for most of my career that my success was dependent on my individual / team efforts. What I learned later from many CEOs who unofficially mentored me is that: Your success is as much a function of the help you receive and give, as it is a function of individual and team brilliance. What a powerful thought!! Here were successful people at the top of the game who believed that their success was built on receiving generosity and help from their networks within and outside their professional world. That is what the more powerful networks are all



about: It's all about how many people you can help. A complete 180 degree turnaround from the me-first networking ass%#%#. This underscores the most important essence of networking: the willingness to help someone out with no benefit to self.

## When do I need a network?

My suggestion is to start building a network before you need it.

## Can I network?

Absolutely! It is not just for the people out of work or the salesmen doling and collecting business cards – it is for all of us- our family, friends, co-workers – with a personal, professional and social relevance

## How do I build a network?

This is simple: help others who need your help. Contribute your time, money and expertise to your current and going community of friends. Use this time, money and effort to make others around you successful. To sum it up eloquently in FMCG lingo of lather, rinse repeat: Find mentors, mentees repeat.

There is a hard part of building a network: asking for help! Many times I would wilt away from asking for help (sometimes I still do). That's just the way some of us are wired: the notion of self-help being the only help.

Here's an interesting take on it: Nothing creates opportunities more than the willingness to ask- whatever the situation: in the elevator, in the car, at a wedding, wherever! If you have invested time, money and effort to help people out, you will have your requests for help answered almost every time you make them. You may find yourself "making an ass of yourself" by asking for what you need" but don't forget the most successful people appreciate "audacity" and

the courage it takes to ask for help. They more than anyone would have benefited from their networks and would be willing to give more than they receive.

One last thought: Avoid so called networking events with thousands of people; they are for the desperate and uninformed. You are usually bound to run into more networking ass%## than you care to meet.

### WIIFM (What's in it for me?)

It's better to give than receive and never keep score! The benefits always follow.

### What is my network?

Your real network is like a dense overgrown jungle with infinite varieties of hidden nooks and crannies that are being neglected. They are:

- Friends and contacts of your parents
- Friends from your gym, office, building & neighborhood.
- Co clients of your banker, hairstylist, accountant
- Friends of friends, old acquaintances from school, college.
- Cousins, brothers, sisters etc.
- Professional networking associations.

Always remember: It is easier to reach out to

people who are at least tangentially a part of your network. Almost everyone you know holds the key to a new set of people.

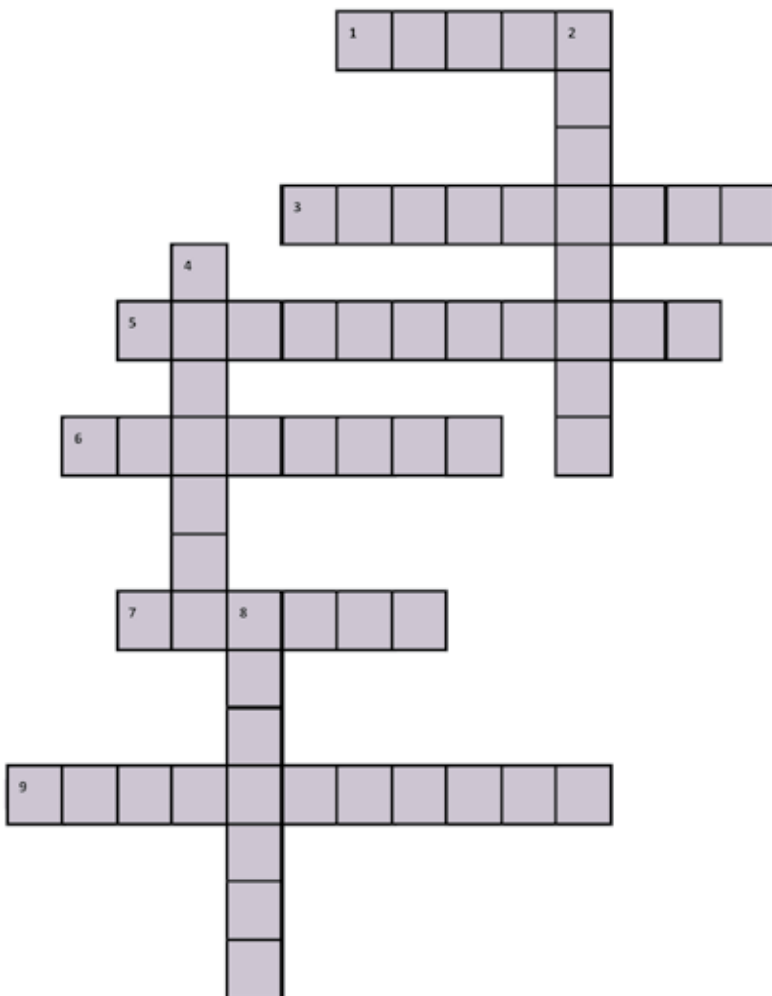
I wish I had some great insights I could have shared with you that were all my own. But all I have written is all that I have read. If there is one thing that I could add, that would be: Create your community or network today. You can't even fathom how much you will receive..... much more than you give. 🙏

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## CROSSWORD



### Across:

1. Provides swiggly food for thought
3. The pur suite of happiness
5. Always followed the leader but never moved an inch
6. One of the few causes of moonlight walks and upset stomachs
7. Soporific lectures and sporadic attendance leads you to your goal
9. An honest reason behind fresh perspectives

### Down:

2. Melting point of budding corporate leaders of the nation
4. Exists in the name of 'DAN ALAN'
8. Pinnacle of cultural convergence

### SOLUTION

