

Reading Guide: *Helpful: A Guide to Life, Careers, and the Art of Networking*

Week I

Read: Preface and Chapters 1 - 3

- Preface
- Chapter 1: First Principles
- Chapter 2: An Introvert's Journey
- Chapter 3: Know Thyself

Discuss

1. We are all interconnected. Agree? Disagree? Comment on the degrees of physical, emotional, social, economic, and political interconnectedness in which you participate.
2. Humans have an innate desire to be helpful. Agree? Disagree? Discuss.
3. Introversion vs extraversion: Where are you on the I/E spectrum? Where are others in your life?
4. What do you find stimulating? If you only had 15 minutes to “recharge your batteries,” what would you do?
5. Using the Jungian notion of orientation, would you say that you are oriented inwardly or outwardly? What about family, friends?
6. Where do you think? Do you need to have your thoughts more fully formed before you verbalize them? Or do you need to verbalize your thoughts to form them?
7. How might these variations in preferences for introversion and extraversion impact how might impact with loved ones, friends, and in professional relationships?

Homework

- Identify three introverts and three extraverts in your life. Talk to them about how their thought processes work, what energizes them, and how they prefer to communicate.

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Week 2

Read: Chapters 4 - 6

- Chapter 4: Why Network?
- Chapter 5: Why Mindsets Matter
- Chapter 6: What is a Network?

Discuss

1. Review the homework from week 1. Share any epiphanies and observations about introversion and extraversion.
2. Discuss the traditional reasons that people network: meet interesting people, to obtain knowledge or information, to find talent, for sales or business development.
3. Discuss the deeper reasons to network: build an asset, serendipity, karma, visibility into what people are working on, because you are part of a global community.
4. Discuss the definition of a network as “the totality of the connections between you and everyone you know, characterized by the freshness and strength of each of those connections.” Does this make sense? Is it necessary? Useful?

Homework

- From the workbook: Network Analysis (Exercise 1)
- Submit questions for call-in with Heather from *Part I: Preparing for our Journey*.

Call-In with Heather

Review Chapters 1 – 6

Discuss

- *Part I: Preparation for Our Journey*.
- Questions presented live or submitted in advance.

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Week 3

Read: Chapters 7 - 9

- Chapter 7: What is Networking?
- Chapter 8: Creating Links
- Chapter 9: Freshening Links

Discuss

1. The definition of networking is “anything that freshens or strengthens a connection for you.” How is this different from how you have thought about networking in the past?
2. How do *you* create new links?
3. What is the importance of attending events to you?
4. What other ways you like create new links in you network?
5. What are some of your favorite ways to freshen a connection with someone?

Homework

- Reach out to the three people in the Networking Analysis exercise from Chapter 6 in which you wished that the connection was fresher. Find a way to freshen those connections.
- Create an aspirational contact list. Identify three to five people whom you would love to have in your network someday.

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Week 4

Read: Chapters 10 - 11

- Chapter 10: Strengthening Links
- Chapter 11: The Ultimate Networking Question

Discuss

1. From last week's homework:
 - Share some of the names of the people in your aspirational contact list.
 - Share some of the results of reaching out to the three people that you identified that you wished the connection were fresher.
2. Discuss the overall idea of being deliberate about strengthening relationships through the constant exchange of favors and information.
3. Discuss why "What do you do?" is such a bad networking question and why it is so tempting to ask it.
4. Discuss the question "What are you working on?" and the various levels at which it can be answered.
5. Discuss small talk. Do you love it or hate it? How does reframing it as a negotiation over how we might communicate and at what level make it useful to networking.

Homework

- Observe the opening volleys of at least five conversations during the week. Note how the conversation started, whether they were able to communicate, and if so, at what level.
- Practice asking people you know "what are you working on?" and then searching your mind for who or what you know that might be helpful.
- Reach out to the three people in the Network Analysis exercise from Chapter 6 in which you wished the connection was stronger. Do a favor, share some information, or find some other way to be helpful to those people in a way that will strengthen the relationships.

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Week 5

Read: Chapters 12 - 14

- Chapter 12: What are You working on?
- Chapter 13: Follow Up
- Chapter 14: Rounding Out the Mindset

Discuss

1. From the last week's homework:
 - Share your observations of people conducting small talk.
 - Share your efforts at strengthening some relationships in your network.
2. Discuss the assumption that people want to be helpful. Does this ring true for you?
3. Briefly share what you are working on at home, at work, in your career, and in life.

Homework

- From the workbook: What Are You Working On? (Exercise 2)
- Submit questions for call-in with Heather from *Part II: The Networking Mindset*.

Call-In with Heather

Review Chapters 5 – 14

Discuss

- *Part II: The Networking Mindset*.
- Questions presented live or submitted in advance.

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Week 6

Read: Chapters 15 - 16

- Chapter 15: The Case for LinkedIn
- Chapter 16: Elements of a Great Profile

Discuss

1. Discuss the eight ways that LinkedIn helps you in your networking. How useful or relevant are each of the items mentioned? Do they count as “networking?”
 - Declare yourself
 - Enhance introductions
 - Refresh your memory
 - Prepare for meetings
 - Find companies that are hiring
 - Provide links to other websites
 - Keep track of who’s in your network
 - Engage in group discussions
2. Discuss the elements of a great profile. Is Heather going a bit overboard here? What’s missing?
 - Current profile
 - Complete profile
 - Profile photo
 - Personalized URL
3. Discuss “What is work?” Is volunteering “work”? How about mentoring? Or eldercare?

Homework

- From the workbook: LinkedIn Profile Reviews (Exercise 3).

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Week 7

Read: Chapter 17

- Chapter 17: Updating Your Profile

Discuss

1. Discuss the three-pass method: what did you do?; what did you learn?; and what are you ready for? Is this a good way to create a resume or professional profile?
2. What do you think about “Turning bad jobs into gold”? Are bad jobs — or bad exits — necessarily a black mark on your resume?
3. Ask members to share bad jobs — or bad work experiences — and invite the rest of the group to help them reframe that experience into one of learning and growth. That is, ask the group to help the person find the nuggets of gold buried in the ore of the bad experience. What did the learning experience prepare them for?

Homework

- From the workbook: Update your LinkedIn Profile (Exercise 4).

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Week 8

Read: Chapters 18 -19

- Chapter 18: Leveraging LinkedIn
- Chapter 19: Mastering Meetings and Events

Discuss

1. Is LinkedIn different from other online platforms in terms of keeping up with the people you know?
2. How often do you check in on your activity feed at LinkedIn? Is it productive to do so?
3. How often do you post any kind of status on LinkedIn?
4. Discuss Heather's admonition to avoid open networkers. Do you agree with her approach to using LinkedIn? Have you been deliberate in your choices of connections in the past?
5. How do you prepare to meet with people? Do you spend as much time and effort as Heather advocates in preparation? Or do you prefer to be more serendipitous and in the moment?
6. Discuss the idea of "working the room."
7. How do you manage your energy when attending large events?
8. How do you strive to be memorable?
9. Do you struggle with remembering people's names? What works for you?
10. How diligent are you in following up with someone after you have met with them?

Homework

- From the workbook: LinkedIn Network Review from A – Z (Exercise 5)
- Check in on your LinkedIn activity feed for 10 – 15 minutes every day for a week. What are you seeing? Who is the most active in your network? Interact as actively as you feel comfortable.
- Share something of value with your network — an article, video, or some other content that you found helpful and you think others might appreciate as well.
- How large is your network? How many 1st and 2nd degree connections do you have?
- Observe the body language of numerous groups the next time you are at a large gathering of people. Watch for open and closed groups. Watch, also, for groups that open and close as the conversation progresses.

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Week 9

Read: Chapters 20 - 22

- Chapter 20: Job Searching and Networking
- Chapter 21: Informational Interviews
- Chapter 22: Mentors and Coaches

Note:

It might be tempting to skip Chapter 20 because most of the people in the group will not be in active job-search mode. This would be a mistake. In the modern era we are always in job-search mode. We are always learning and preparing ourselves for whatever comes next. The advice and methods in Chapters 20-21 work best when utilized during active employment.

Discuss

1. Discuss the allure of job postings, their low correlation to what the company really needs, and the futility of submitting an application online before getting to know the hiring manager.
2. Discuss the notion of seeking first to add value — i.e. leading your career based on a spirit of helpfulness rather than on trying to find a job.
3. Unpack the notion that the best job description is the one you write yourself. How is this even possible? Have you done it?
4. Share experiences when you have given or received informational interviews.
5. Discuss the differences between a mentor and coach. Is it a distinction with a difference?
6. Share experiences of having a mentor and being a mentor.
7. Share experiences of working with a coach.

Homework

- Identify an area or topic in your life in which an informational interview would be a good way to learn more about it.
- Identify three people you would love to have as a mentor. What would you hope to learn from them? What will it take for you to be ready to ask them?
- Submit questions for call-in with Heather from *Part III: Networking In Action*.

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Call-In with Heather

Review Chapters 15 – 22

Discuss

- *Part III: Networking in Action.*
- Questions presented live or submitted in advance.

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Week 10

Read: Chapters 23 - 25

- Chapter 23: Inside Networking
- Chapter 24: The Modern Organization
- Chapter 25: The Elements of Career Success

Discuss

1. The notion of networking is usually applied to realms outside of your current organization and often only in the context of searching for a job. Are the ideas presented in Parts I – III of *Helpful* relevant inside of organizations? Do they all transfer inside?
2. How do companies benefit if the employees are well-networked?
3. Is your company well-networked? Why or why not?
4. How well does Heather's characterization of the modern organization match your experience? Is your organization hierarchical? Or matrixed?
5. How has leadership evolved over the course of your career?
6. Discuss the three elements of success:
 - What does it mean to do good work?
 - What does it mean to do the right work?
 - What does it mean to be visible?
7. Share your experiences of doing all three of the elements of success. Have you always done good work, the right work, and been visible?

Homework

- Using your current position (or your most recent one) rate yourself on a scale of 1 – 10 in each of the following areas:
 - What is the quality of your work? That is, are you doing “good work?”
 - What is the relevancy of your work? That is, are you doing “the right work?” How important is your work to the success of your team or your company?
 - How visible are you?

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Week 11

Read: Chapters 26 - 27

- Chapter 26: Influence and Power
- Chapter 27: Networking at Work: The Players

Discuss

1. Is the idea of “influence” a viable substitution for the notion of “power?”
2. Discuss your comfort level with power. Is it okay to have organizational power? Do you feel powerful?
3. Where does *your* power come from?
4. Explore how people make decisions.
 - What does it mean that no one makes a decision in an instant?
 - Do you agree that no one makes a decision in a vacuum?
5. Explore the idea of The Influence Map.
 - Is it ok to be so deliberate and systematic about influencing in an organization?
 - Is “working the influence map” an effective way to drive change in an organization?
6. Discuss the importance of being well-networked with each of the key levels of stakeholders:
 - Teammates
 - Other peers
 - Stakeholders
 - Leaders of support organizations
 - Your boss’s peers
 - Your boss’s boss

Homework

- From the workbook: Influence a promotion (Exercise 6)
 - Create an actual map with circles and arrows.
 - Do it as a hypothetical exercise using a past position if not currently employed.

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Week 12

Read: Chapter 28

- Chapter 28: Networking At Work: The Talking Points

Discuss

1. Discuss the differences between implicit and explicit drivers. Give examples from your company or an organization with which you are familiar.
2. Discuss the differences between personal and organizational drivers.
3. What are some of your personal drivers?
4. Describe the culture of your current organization. Feel free to use terms that are typically applied to individuals, e.g. shy, generous, introverted, etc. If you are familiar with any personality assessments, such as DISC or Myers-Briggs, assess your organization in terms of those dimensions as well.
5. Discuss Heather's theory that nearly all of office "politics" is merely misaligned drivers. Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Homework

- From the workbook: Organizational Drivers (Exercise 7).
- From the workbook: Personal Drivers and Constraints (Exercise 8).
- Now that you have learned about the talking points for networking inside your organization, reread Chapter 27 about the players to get a better understanding of how the talking points apply to each of the key players in your organization.

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Week 13

Read: Chapters 29 - 30

- Chapter 29: Informational Interviews Within Organizations
- Chapter 30: Final Thoughts

Discuss

- How useful, or practical, is it to conduct informational interviews inside of your company?
- Review the entire arc of the book. What have you learned? What stands out? What will you take with you?
- Who else needs to learn about this approach to networking? How can you help spread the word?

Homework

- Share how you have changed your approach to networking with at least three people in your network.
- Write a review of *Helpful*. Use the template at heatherhollick.com/bookreview to help you come up with a good review quickly.
- Submit questions for call-in with Heather from *Part IV: Networking at Work*.

Call-In with Heather

Review Chapters 23 – 30

Discuss

- *Part IV: Networking in Action*.
- Reactions, insights, lessons from the entire book.
- Questions presented live or submitted in advance.