

Helping your friends work the Network

A note from Battiston Consulting

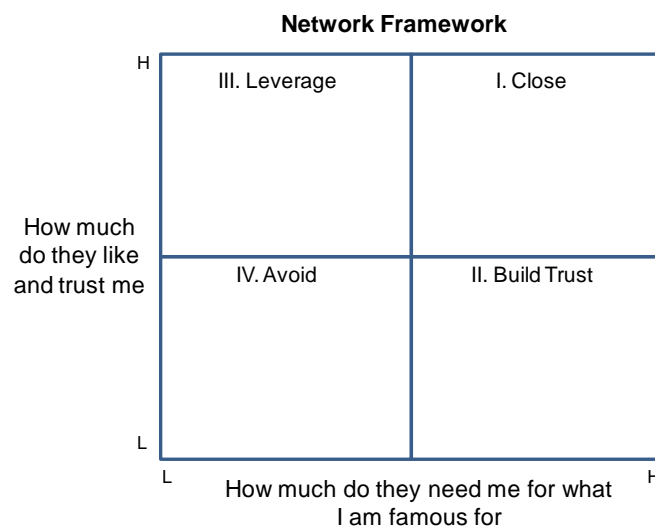
Many of us know of friends who are looking for a job. Of course they have made a list of head hunters to look up, and they are monitoring the job sites and trawling the papers – but how do they best **work the network**?

We are not HR consultants – but over the last 10 years we have developed this technique for helping our friends. The purpose of this brief note is to share our approach so that you can help friends who are looking for a job.

For the job seeker, the important thing is to think about your contacts in two dimensions – how much each contact:

- **likes and trusts** you
- needs you for what you are **famous** for

Then construct a four quadrant (2 X 2) matrix and put the contacts into one of the four quadrants:



- **Quadrant I. Close** – This is the quadrant that you need to get one (and ideally more than one) contacts into. You are more likely to be offered a job when the contact likes and trusts you, and where you have demonstrated that you have the capabilities to solve their problems. Your job is to **build** to this quadrant – and ideally you want to try to bring two to three job offers “to the boil” at almost the same time – and then chose the job that you most want. (You choose the employer rather than the employer choosing you).
- **Quadrant II. Build Trust** – Contacts in this quadrant have a need for your capabilities, *but they just don't know you well enough*. If you think about it, this is the way that it works when you answer a job advertisement in the paper. You apply because you have the skills, and you **build trust** (and build a professional relationship) in a series of steps ... submitting a CV, going to see the head hunter, making the short list, having the initial interview, having your references checked,

maybe having a police check / degree validation check and then completing final interviews.

- **Quadrant III. Leverage** – This is where the **network** can particularly help you. Contacts in this quadrant like and trust you – but they don't have any personal need for your set of skills. However, if you can very clearly explain to these contacts the sort of job you are looking for (i.e. your subject matter expertise, the industries you know well, the sort of job where your personality is an asset, etc) – then contacts in this quadrant may be pleased to suggest two to three names of other people who could help. Ideally good contacts in this quadrant will then phone or email two to three “new contacts” – and suggest that it would be a good idea for you and them to have a quick coffee. If you can get 20 contacts in this quadrant to give you two to three “new contacts”, then you will have expanded your initial network by 40 to 60 “new contacts”.
- **Quadrant IV. Avoid** – Contacts in this quadrant are **toxic** and you need to avoid them. It may be that they don't really like you and so won't be interested in helping you. But you also need to avoid people who will hurt your confidence. It is also important to know who to avoid because networking is a very time intensive business – don't waste it!

So, to rewind, we suggest that the job seeker completes three steps.

Step 1: Work out who comprises your initial network

Export your “Contacts” from Outlook (or another source if relevant) to an excel spreadsheet.

Most people should then be able to expand their list of contacts, so the next step is to add to the excel spreadsheet contacts from other sources. These sources could include:

- Work colleagues who are prepared to provide a referral contact
- People for whom you have business cards that are not in your Outlook Contacts file
- People from outside work who might be useful and who might be able to help
- Friends who are prepared to provide a referral contact

Hopefully you have now got a list of 50 to 100 people in your excel spreadsheet. The more the better!

Step 2: Think about your initial network on two dimensions

For each person in your initial network, think about how much they:

- **like and trust** you
- need you for what you are **famous** for

and give each person a 1 (Low) to 5 (High) score for each of the two dimensions – which you will translate into this 2X2 matrix. So for example, Fred (say an old work colleague who moved to another firm a year ago) is a good friend so scores a High (i.e. a 5) on the Like and Trust dimension, but a Low (i.e. 1) on the Need me dimension – so he is in the Leverage quadrant. Fred might be able to point you in some useful directions by leveraging his network for your benefit.

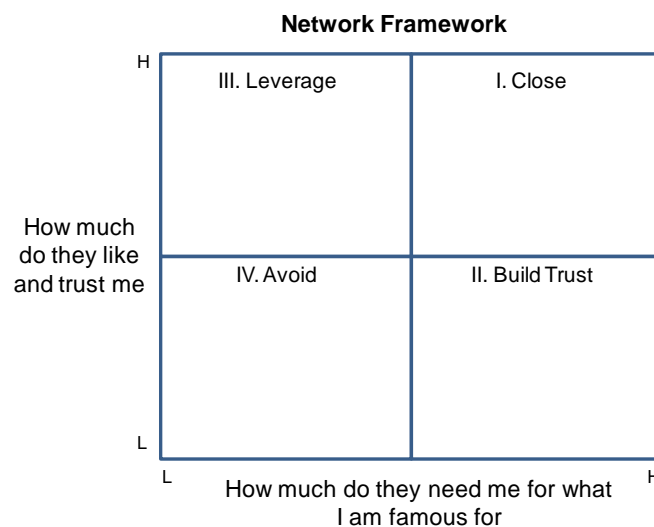
The “like and trust” dimension is important because people *help people that they like!* You may feel that you are imposing yourself on people – but we suggest that if the roles were reversed that you would probably be pleased to help them.

The “need you for what you are famous for” dimension is all about first sorting out what you are well known for – given that future employers want people who have a track record and credibility. Think about what you are well known for in terms of:

- Subject matter expertise (e.g. risk management, project management, etc)
- Industries (e.g. banking, insurance, manufacturing, etc)
- Personality (e.g. good listener, problem solver, easy to get along with, etc)
- Level in the organisation

and then map whether the “planets are in alignment”, i.e. does the contact have a need (a problem) where you have the right capabilities to help solve that problem.

Then assign each contact into one of the four quadrants:



Step 3: Use the Framework

So, in the excel spreadsheet – put what quadrant number each contact is in. Sort the contact quadrants from 1 to 4. Then add a large column to the right for each contact – and put what you want to do with that contact – and when, e.g. “Call Fred for a coffee by end of May 2009”. Update that column after you see that contact, e.g. “Fred suggests that I see Terry in the PMO office at the Bank – he will email Terry to expect my call”.

Of course, also add in contacts from the head hunters and from jobs that you see advertised in the paper and on the internet.

A tip in making calls is not to approach people saying "I want your help to get me a job" – instead try a more general approach of "I want your help". The second approach is more relaxed and less threatening.

Good luck with your networking and job hunting. A number of people have said to us that job hunting is harder than working. Just remember the comment that Bill Clinton used so effectively against George Bush (senior) in 1992 US election: "It's the economy stupid", i.e. a lot of good people have been made redundant – more often because of the economy and not because of personal failings. That's why it is important to be an excellent networker - as well as doing the "traditional" things like seeing the head hunters and answering job advertisements in the paper and on the internet.

One last thought: once you have got your people in the quadrants you have, in effect, created an asset that mirrors your network. And once you have found a new position don't let that asset wither away. Keep up your networking with your friends and you will continue to nurture an asset that will be useful throughout your career.

About Battiston Consulting:

At Battiston Consulting our goal is to help our clients solve their business and IT problems and drive valuable outcomes. Our clients benefit from our effective approach to problem solving, our adoption of best practices, our goal of making our clients successful, our ability to transfer knowledge and capabilities, and our business-based approach to delivering advice and leveraging experience.