

OFFICE POLITICS

How networking can make anyone a creative genius

It boosts your career and your profile, but also makes you more innovative, says **Judith Perle**

HOW OFTEN have you been told to network to boost your professional profile, climb the promotion ladder, or to find a new job? But has anyone ever told you that networking will make you more creative? If not, then read on.

Ronald Burt of the University of Chicago studied the professional networks of 673 managers running the supply chain of an electronics corporation, and measured two things: the likelihood of their expressing a new idea, and the likelihood that senior management would engage with that idea and judge it to be valuable.

Burt's results show that innovation isn't necessarily born out of individual genius or, to use a well-worn cliché, "blue-sky thinking". Instead, he demonstrates that people who build diverse networks, so that they become bridges (or brokers) between different social or professional groups, are at a "greater risk of having a good idea". Why? Well, as he puts it: "This is not creativity born of genius; it is creativity as an import-export business." So innovators aren't necessarily exceptionally smart people with exceptionally creative minds - bright sparks able to think differently.



Innovators aren't necessarily bright sparks able to think differently - but people just like you or me

They can be people just like you and me, who do two very important things: they mix with a wide variety of individuals, not just their close friends, and they listen as well as talk.

SPREADING THE WORD

But successful innovation isn't just about having good ideas: you also need to put your idea into practice and get buy-in from colleagues. In a study of a global consulting firm, Louise Mors of London Business School found that managers deal with these challenges by nurturing and tapping into different sorts of personal networks, both within and outside the

Never be unconnected
WiFi Finder
Free



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organisation. As we've seen, finding innovative ideas is best done through a wide-ranging, open network in which relatively few people are connected to each other. Interacting with a very wide variety of people, from different backgrounds and with different mindsets, exposes managers to more and more varied ideas.

On the other hand, when you want to implement a new idea or persuade others to do so, it's easier if your network is denser, with more overlapping connections. Mors doesn't explain why, but I think we can safely assume that the people in such networks know and respect each other. You don't necessarily need to convince each and every member of your network separately; by talking to each other, they will help spread the word and do some of the work for you.

Interestingly, Burt showed that active networkers reap personal benefits too: "more positive performance evaluations, faster promotions, higher compensation and more successful teams". Put simply, the evidence shows that, by nurturing a wide-ranging network, you are much more likely to be successful in your career. So what's good for your employer in terms of fruitful innovation turns out to be good for you too. A pleasing win-win outcome.

Judith Perle specialises in teaching people about networking - what it is, why it's helpful, and how to do it better. Contact her at JPerle@ManAdvan.com or via www.ManAdvan.com

COFFEE BREAK

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SUDOKU

Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9 to solve this tricky Sudoku puzzle.

		6			7			9
	5	1						
	2							6
			5					
	1		4		2			7
4							9	
	4	8			6			2
				4		5		8
						3		

KAKURO

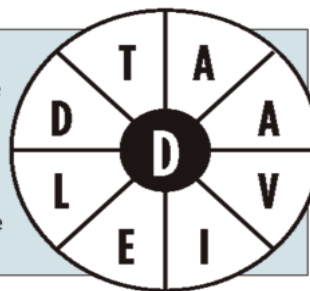
Fill the grid so that each block adds up to the total in the box above or to the left of it.

You can only use the digits 1-9 and you must not use the same digit twice in a block. The same digit may occur more than once in a row or column, but it must be in a separate block.

	19	8		22	28		35	6	18
14				11			12		
3			8				20		
45			10				15		
7	22							21	9
27						23			
11								10	
11			17	15		34	17		
						14			
16	23							12	11
45									
24						7		16	
10						17			4

WORDWHEEL

Using only the letters in the Wordwheel, you have ten minutes to find as many words as possible, none of which may be plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. Each word must be of three letters or more, all must contain the central letter and letters can only be used once in every word. There is at least one nine-letter word in the wheel.



QUICK CROSSWORD

1		2		3		4		5		6
				7						
8										
						9				
10						11				
										12
						13		14		
15										
								16		
						17				
18								19		

ACROSS

- 1 Haywire, awry (5)
- 5 Female pig (3)
- 7 US state, capital Boise (5)
- 8 Russian prison camp for political prisoners (5)
- 9 Church instrument (5)
- 10 Stretchy fabric (7)
- 13 Wealthy and privileged people (coll) (3,4)
- 15 Emit an odour (5)
- 16 Stringed instrument of Indian origin (5)
- 17 Construct (a building) (5)
- 18 Ancient (3)
- 19 Imperial units of length (5)

DOWN

- 1 Fisherman (6)
- 2 Rude (3-8)
- 3 The faculty of vision (5)
- 4 Mayhem (5)
- 5 Greatly desired (6,5)
- 6 Notify of danger (4)
- 11 Brother of George Gershwin (3)
- 12 Egyptian god of the underworld (6)
- 13 Group of ships (5)
- 14 Appetising (5)
- 15 Alone (4)

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

S	E	N	S	E	C	A	G	E	S	
I	G	V	Y	U	P					
D	I	S	T	I	N	G	T	I	V	E
E	E	L	L	D	E	N				
S	A	Y	S	D	E	S	E	R	T	
R	H	I	E	A						
S	T	R	E	A	M	A	C	T	S	
W	E	B	P	H	I					
E	V	A	P	O	R	A	T	I	N	G
E	D	V	L	L	N					
T	A	S	T	E	M	I	L	L	S	

KAKURO

8	6		2	4		9	7	
6	2	1	4	7	5	8	3	9
		3	6		2	5	1	8
8	9	4	7		3	7		
1	4	2		4	1	6	3	2
2	6		8	9	6		1	3
6	8	4	9	7		3	9	8
		1	3		8	6	7	9
4	9	5	7		9	2		
6	8	3	5	2	7	1	9	4
	5	2		1	5		4	1

SUDOKU

5	1	6	7	2	8	3	4	9
4	7	3	5	1	9	8	6	2
8	2	9	4	6	3	7	1	5
2	3	5	8	7	4	1	9	6
6	8	4	1	9	2	5	3	7
1	9	7	3	5	6	4	2	8
9	4	8	6	3	5	2	7	1
7	5	2	9	4	1	6	8	3
3	6	1	2	8	7	9	5	4

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was **REPRIMAND**