

## Topic 7 – Networking

- How Networking is a Game-Changer.

What's one thing we are not taught in school? The importance of networking!

- What is networking? Networking is defined as “the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts.”
- Why is it important? Because an increased professional network leads to more business opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate faster advancement, and greater status and authority. It also helps to build the quality of work and increases job satisfaction.
- Unfortunately, many people dislike networking. Why? Because to many, it feels “fake” or “phony”—like you're only speaking with the person to make a connection.
- Strategies to use to help overcome negative feelings about networking:
  - **Focus on learning.** Try to view networking events/opportunities as an opportunity to grow and learn, instead of as something you are obligated to take part in. View the event as an opportunity to discover and learn, rather than a chore.
  - **Identify a common interest.** Think about how your interests and goals align with those people you meet and how that can forge meaningful work relationships. When your networking is driven by substantive, shared interests, it will feel more authentic.
  - **Think broadly about what you can give.** People that are more senior in an organization tend to have more positive feelings about networking. This may be related to the idea that these individuals feel that they have more to offer than someone that is more junior. But junior-level employees have a lot to offer as well. They have differing perspectives, and can offer the more senior-employee gratitude, recognition and enhanced reputation.
  - **Find a higher purpose.** Don't just consider your own personal benefits when networking. Consider benefits to your organization. How the new contact may help you understand your job/role better or complete a new task/launch a new project more efficiently. People that focus on the benefits of networking for their organization (instead of solely for themselves), find that networking becomes more authentic and less “dirty”.
- Possible discussion questions:
  - Do you network? If so, do you have specific organizations that you use to meet new people?
  - How often do you network? Once a month? Once a week?
  - Tips and tricks?
  - Can you share any success stories? How has networking helped to further a personal or professional goal?
  - Do you have networking pitfalls to share?