

## Business Skills 360 - Networking 2: Network Maintenance

### Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the size and strength of your business network?
2. Do you have a system of organizing your network or do you rely on memory?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using email to keep in touch with your contacts?

### Vocabulary

**to reinforce** – to add support or make something stronger; “Norman used excellent customer testimonials to reinforce his sales pitch.”

**to keep track of** – to record and organize information; “Ron uses his new smartphone to keep track of all his contacts and appointments.”

**exchange** – to trade or give in return for something received; “After the soccer match, players from the two teams exchanged jerseys.”

**to check in** – to investigate or contact someone casually; “I like to check in at my elderly parents house every week just to make sure they are okay.”

**bookkeeper** – a person who records financial transactions and keeps accounts; “Every Friday, Brad sends the week’s expense receipts to the bookkeeper for entry into the books.”

**to lay off** – to dismiss an employee, usually for economic reasons; “When the economy went into recession, Packer Minerals had to lay off over 100 employees.”

**in the bank** – saved or stored for future use; “I put a big favour in the bank with my brother when I let him drive my Porsche on his date.”

**nodes** – a connecting point; “The computer server functioned as the node between the company’s network and the Internet.”

**dead-end** – having no exit or possibility of further progress; “Frank’s father told him to quit his dead-end job at the restaurant and find something that would help him develop.”

**evaluate** – to determine something’s value or form an opinion of something; “The teacher evaluated the student’s based on the quality of their work and their attitude.”

## Transcript

Hi everyone. I'm Tim Simmons and you're listening to Business Skills 360. Glad you could join me today for the second part of our look at networking skills. In this episode, I'm going to focus on what I'll call "network maintenance," or how to make sure your network is healthy, organized, and effective.

You see, passing out business cards is not enough. I can spend all week attending events and talking to people and manage to hand out 200 business cards but *still* not have a healthy and effective network. To do that, you need to *maintain* your network. You need to take care of it and **reinforce** its connections. You need to *work* your network. Just how can we do that? Glad you asked.

One of the first things you can do is **to keep track of** your network on paper or electronically. Take notes on your contacts. Record more than just phone numbers and email addresses. Write down interesting business-related information like current projects or past accomplishments. Also write down non-work information... things about family or personal interests. These things may come in very handy in the future when you talk with this contact again. Consider the difference between "Oh, hello... uh... Greg, right? Where do you work again?" and "Oh, hello Greg, I hope the furniture biz is treating you well, and by the way: how is your daughter adjusting to her new career?"

Another important part of network maintenance is following up on conversations. You meet someone, you **exchange** cards, and you have a brief chat. Great. A couple of days later you should send this new contact a brief email message just to say it was a pleasure talking. Mention something specific that you talked about just to help the person remember. Connections that are not reinforced will die. A brief follow-up after first meeting is a great way to increase the chance that your connection will survive.

Reinforcing your network even further means working your connections regularly. Don't be afraid to call on people for help. If you're faced with a difficult issue, look through your network to see if anyone can help. It might just mean placing a call for five minutes of advice. No problem. Every conversation will make weak contacts stronger. Remind people you exist. **Check in** regularly. If you hear a piece of news that you think someone might find interesting, pass it on. Show that you're an active contact, and people will do the same in return.

Also remember that we're talking about healthy and effective networks, not healthy and effective relationships. What's the difference? Well, you may have a few dozen good business relationships, but if none of those people ever become connected, then it's not really a network. Every relationship is simply the connection point between two people's vast networks, and you should take every opportunity to connect *other* people *through* you. Here's an example. You have a business associate named Nancy who needs to hire a new **bookkeeper**. You meet someone at a networking event named Joe who tells you he had to **lay off** several people in his accounting department. What do you do? You connect Nancy and Joe. Doing this strengthens your relationship with both people and puts two favors **in the bank**, one with Nancy and one with Joe.

You need to learn to view people as **nodes** in a network, not as isolated individuals. When you meet someone, don't think only of what he or she might be able to do for you, think of what everyone in his or her network might be able to do. Good contacts are the ones that have good networks. A person who has an unhealthy network, or no network at all, is a **dead-end** contact. And remember other people are **evaluating** you as a contact. Show that you are a good one. Don't be a dead end.

Great stuff. That wraps up our look at networking. If you'd like to learn more from today's lesson and test yourself, have a look at the [myBEonline.com](http://myBEonline.com) website. There you'll find discussion questions, some vocab, a quiz, and a complete transcript of for this episode. Thanks for listening, and see you again soon.

## Review

1. According to Tim, network maintenance means ensuring that your network is...
  - A ... healthy, memorized, and dead-end
  - B ... small, organized, and powerful
  - C ... healthy, organized, and effective
  - D ... global, specific, and effective
  
2. What is NOT something that Tim suggests writing down about your contacts?
  - A Current projects
  - B Family details
  - C Future aspirations
  - D Past accomplishments
  
3. According to Tim, what does the following conversation opening demonstrate: "Oh, hello... uh... Greg, right? Where do you work again?"
  - A A result of poor network organization
  - B An effective way of becoming reacquainted
  - C Something that might be better done through email
  - D A good way to put off unwanted contacts
  
4. What does Tim recommend mentioning in a follow-up email?
  - A The person's business card design
  - B A specific topic of conversation
  - C A family member
  - D A specific work problem you have
  
5. Complete this sentence with the right word: *Show that you're an \_\_\_\_\_ contact, and people will do the same in return.*
  - A Passive
  - B Well-connected
  - C Accomplished
  - D Active
  
6. Which of the following are aspects of good network maintenance?
  - A Connecting other people through you
  - B Viewing people as isolated individuals
  - C Calling on people for help
  - D Avoiding personal conversation
  - E Organizing information
  - F Checking in with your contacts
  - G Limiting the total number of contacts
  - H Handing out a lot of business cards

## Review Answers

1. According to Tim, network maintenance means ensuring that your network is...

**C ... healthy, organized, and effective**

2. What is NOT something that Tim suggests writing down about your contacts?

**C future aspirations**

3. According to Tim, what does the following conversation opening demonstrate:  
"Oh, hello... uh... Greg, right? Where do you work again?"

**A a result of poor network organization**

4. What does Tim recommend mentioning in a follow-up email?

**B a specific topic of conversation**

5. Complete this sentence with the right word: *Show that you're an \_\_\_\_\_ contact, and people will do the same in return.*

**D active**

6. Which of the following are aspects of good network maintenance?

**A connecting other people through you**

**C calling on people for help**

**E organizing information**

**F checking in with your contacts**