



SCALE  
IDEAS &  
IMPACT

# Energy & Passion Create Reputation, Leading to Expanded Network & Opportunities

## CASE CONTEXT

An individual contributor added side projects to his core work, in a way that showcased his personality and expertise. His energy and passion came through as he contributed to the company's internal social media platforms, leading to a strong reputation that helped pull him into more projects and networks.



MALE

Level: INDIVIDUAL  
CONTRIBUTOR

Industry:  
COMMUNICATION

## HIGH-PERFORMING LEADERS LEVERAGE NETWORKS TO DO 5 THINGS

Based on 20 years of research in more than 300 organizations, we know that the quality of your professional relationship play a significant role in your success. We have extended this research to describe the way high-performing leaders leverage their networks to: Innovate, Execute, Scale, Thrive and Adapt.



As a trainer in the learning and development group of a global company, Lamont is involved in creating and

delivering content and programs to employees, both in-person and virtually. He has been in the role for five years, but the job has grown in positive ways. As an individual contributor, he has become someone others want to draw into their projects and network. He has created that pull through personal passion and drive, morphing what he knows to other people's needs and being an energizer.

A couple years ago, Lamont was an early and eager adopter of the company's internal communication tool, which operates much like external social media platforms. "I was in that space all the time because I was excited about it. It was social media. It was a different way of looking at things. Some people adapted to it and some people did not. I adapted to it because that's just my personality." He used the various functions and features to establish himself as the go-to resource in his department. At first, he answered questions and posted information. Later, he expanded to video tutorials. "I created a lot of fun and helpful things, and I got a lot of followers because of it ... It established my personal brand."

Lamont's side projects and energetic contributions were noticed and supported by his current boss and a former boss. "My first boss pushed me into projects that she knew that I could handle ... That kind of started me up ... Through her push, through her leadership, through her connecting me with the right people, I started being put in positions to meet people, and that opened up more opportunities for me." His current boss, too, has encouraged Lamont. "My boss now, it's just been absolutely wonderful ... He gives you opportunities and pushes you. Even when it's like, *Really? You want me to do what?* You do it because of who he is and the type of leadership and energy he brings ... He trusts me and I trust him. I know that he would always have my back no matter what ... Because that trust is there, I am willing to do more."

With the confidence built by the trust and encouragement of his two bosses, Lamont continued his efforts, even adding a regular podcast to his work. His passion and humor shined through: "I like to throw in a little bit of fun, no matter what I do ... I'll bring in my kids or my co-workers; I'll have contests. I try to get people involved and talking to each other on the site ... Even though there's an important message behind it, I want it to be entertaining enough for people to watch ... I think it's important to have that passion."

Lamont's work continued to gain attention, including by some business leaders who gave shout-outs and links to some of the content. Soon, people were giving suggestions for topics or inviting him into their projects. "Any time I had an opportunity, I seized it."

Whenever he traveled for his job, people knew him from his videos and podcast and it opened other doors. He even interviewed senior executives for a video when he was working at headquarters for two weeks—visibility that led to the next big step: a monthly video project to support a strategic priority. "Had it not been for all that I had created before that, it would not have happened ... Now, that project is a success ... The monthly video is something that people really look forward to now."

Over time, Lamont had established trust in his ability and his consistency, which made others confident in working with him. "Because of what I've been doing, I've created a different network, and I'm getting all these different projects on top of my regular work." Lamont now coordinates a group of people who contribute to the strategic video project, as well as other videos, while continuing his personal posts and podcast. He's begun to develop a capacity for the technical processes, but more important has tapped into other people's interests and passions. "There are a couple key contributors who are just as passionate about the project as I am ... We're all busy, but we find the time." As Lamont's energy and contributor network grows, the opportunities and potential for the communication tool also grow. "It's all come from about having a passion for what you do. If I can find people who are like-minded about the work, who are motivated, those are the best people to collaborate with."

The ability to bring a personal interest to bear on his work paid off for Lamont, both in terms of having work he enjoys and for his larger career aspirations. But, he is genuinely excited that what he does has value to others and contributes to his colleagues and his company. "My whole purpose is to support our employees and the company. It's my goal to find whatever the objective is in the project and make it happen through video, through social media, through the network ... If I end up looking good in the process, that's a bonus to me."

## Network Insights

- **Leverage managers and mentors for referrals and introductions.** Seize opportunities that come your way and deliver on your commitments. Over time, you will reach out less and be pulled in more based on your reputation and connections.
- **Create energy by seeing possibilities and morphing what you know to the other people's interests and work.** Lamont's ability to translate his passion and skills to a variety of projects has pulled him into new arenas and expanded his network.
- **Engage with others in ways that are authentic and show your passion.** This builds trust and energy in interactions with others. Over time, you form a reputation as someone people want to work with.
- **Co-create by bringing others in early on and trusting them to execute.** This allows for innovation and to scale ideas and projects beyond yourself. It is key for individual contributors to avoid collaborative overload.

## Finding Purpose at Work is Tied to People

Lamont is excited by the work he is doing—but he sees that value is created by how he connects with other people in the process and through the outcomes. Purpose is built for Lamont by several relational factors, including:

1. People valuing what he produces: "When word gets out, people like what I've done and people start to believe in me and what I can do."
2. A trusted boss who appreciates his work: "When you have that trust, and you are getting pushed, you want to do more."
3. Colleagues who share his motivation: "If I can find people who are just as passionate about a project as I am."
4. People who come through on their commitments: "When you meet the people you know you can count on."

Lamont knows the difference when these relationships are not present and is appreciative of his current situation. He has worked for difficult bosses or in teams whose work was not valued. And, he sees his wife struggling in her job, where relationships and interactions are de-energizing.

### ABOUT THE RESEARCH & ROB CROSS

Building on 20 years of research with more than 300 organizations, the Network Leader Research Project seeks to understand the approach and strategies that enable certain leaders to consistently achieve peak performance. The research includes 160 in-depth interviews conducted by Rob Cross, a Professor of Management at University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce. The Connected Commons is currently focusing its research on leadership effectiveness, talent optimization and organizational alignment and change—three areas where network insights can clearly drive performance. For more information visit [www.connectedcommons.com](http://www.connectedcommons.com) or email Rob at [rlcrossjr@gmail.com](mailto:rlcrossjr@gmail.com).