



This is one of 12 lesson guides created for Transitions.

Surge Early With Proactive Outreach to a Broad, Cross-Boundary Network

PRINCIPLE

Integrate rapidly by pursuing a broad network. Build relationships across functions, expertise, locations and perspectives to get a full view of the people, the work and the challenges in your new context. Connect with people in ways tailored to their role and needs.



“I went into this knowing I would be building a broad spectrum of relationships, one at a time, within the team and across the business. It takes a little bit longer, but there is less re-work and it dramatically speeds execution.”

MANAGING TRANSITIONS

Entry into a new organization, changing roles, new responsibilities and promotion all place demands on you that can most efficiently be met by leveraging networks. Make transitions successful by investing in networks in three ways:

Initiate

Jumpstart productivity and inclusion by cultivating essential connections broadly and before you need help from others.

Engage

Energize people in your network and pull colleagues to you and your ideas when engaging with new groups.

Refine

Re-calibrate networks and collaborative practices for long-term effectiveness and well-being.

Onboarding processes and common advice about starting strong in a new job often focus on connecting with formal stakeholders in the first 90 days. While important, this narrow approach to building an effective network often undercuts success by missing an array of connections critical to execution.

Our research shows that people with broad, boundary spanning networks—ties across functions, levels and expertise domains—tend to enjoy higher performance, better pay, rapid promotion and job mobility. If you prioritize building a broad-based network the first 60-90 days in a new role, you dramatically increase the odds of success. To do this:

- Meet with internal or external customers or clients as well as key stakeholders and groups who are impacted by what you do (i.e., a sales force adopting your new app, long-standing suppliers, technical experts) to understand their specific needs and broad context.
- Get to know colleagues in functional and corporate roles, such as marketing, facilities and human resources to smooth execution of work with them.
- Seek a 1:1 with formal leaders to learn their goals, motivations and interests as well as to understand the business and political context.
- Engage personally with team members and direct reports to begin to build trust and gain knowledge of their capabilities, interests and aspirations.
- Establish yourself with peers as a collaborator, sounding board and resource.

Notably, more effective newcomers engage each of these groups differently to build support. They tailor the interactions to understand the other person’s role and needs—not to drive their own interests. They ask questions to learn context and mandate, offer help and learn how others prefer to work.

Rick made a list of 47 people to meet within the first 45 days—in addition to building relationships with his manager and within his team. With the heads of the firm’s practices and regions, he sought to understand the business and how his team could be an asset. He also asked, *“Who’s your trusted deputy? Who do you want me to work with?”* He introduced himself to heads of corporate groups such as finance and legal to establish relationships before he had a need: *“Help me know what you do and how you operate. When people need something from you, what approach works best?”* Sienna focused on understanding each of her teams, their work, who they engaged with and how. In her first one-on-ones, she asked: *“What do you do? What would you like to do?”* Similarly, she had exploratory conversations with internal clients: *“What do you need? How are you being served by the team? How would you like to be served?”*

By prioritizing broad network development early on, newcomers pave the way for access to expertise, resources, information and gain a greater network platform to work from compared to newcomers who simply build a narrow, formal network.

BUILD A DIVERSIFIED NETWORK ON ENTRY

To be effective, your network does not need to be big or consume a lot of time. Rather, networks of high performers are *diversified* across expertise domains, functions and levels. Such networks create the path to future opportunities and allow for effective transitions into new roles.

Make network development a priority in the first 60-90 days in a new organization, function or team. Review the five categories below and consider where you need to initiate, revitalize or strengthen relationships. In the column on the right, list names of people you need to meet. If you don't know a specific person, write down the group or function. Use this list to set meetings or ask for introductions.

WHO TO CONNECT WITH EARLY ON	LIST NAMES, GROUPS OR EXPERTISE TO REACH OUT TO
<p>Key stakeholders and customers/clients. Seek to understand their context, projects and current needs to gain a broad view of challenges and opportunities. Ask how you can make their work easier. Co-create potential solutions for buy in and look to execute an early, mutual win.</p>	
<p>Formal leaders—and their trusted deputies. Get up to speed on key leaders' goals, motivations and interests to understand the business and political context. Ask how your team can help. Then, find out who they rely on (i.e., chief of staff, go-to manager, administrator). This allows you to gain insight and execute work while respecting the leaders' time.</p>	
<p>Colleagues in functional and support roles. Set up meetings with key people who will support your work <i>before</i> you have a need—this smooths execution and generates good will. Focus on their range of responsibility/expertise and how they operate. Ask how best to engage them when needed and what they need from you.</p>	
<p>Teams and direct reports. Take time to get to know people personally, including their interests, capabilities and aspirations, as a starting point for building trust. Focus on better understanding what people currently do, what they want to do and who they are connected to within the team and in other parts of the business.</p>	
<p>Peers. Build rapport and learn about peers' background, roles and networks. Rely on them as sounding boards (<i>What do you think? What am I missing?</i>) and sensors into the organization (<i>What are you hearing?</i>) to gain early insights from multiple perspectives.</p>	

NETWORK TIPS

- **Ask your new manager for a list of people in the above categories that you should build relationships with.** Do this quickly—even before you start the job—to leverage the benefit of being new. Include immediate team members and anybody you need to rely on to get work done.
- **Ask for referrals to people you should know who are important to your work.** When you meet with people, always ask *who else* you should speak with. This often will get you to a small handful of people that will matter for your work and help you build legitimacy.
- **Be sure to build relationships before you need something.** People are more likely to help—or go out of their way for you—if you have established a connection.