MPA
MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL A
MPAMAGAZINE.COM.AU
ISSUE 17.11

THE $520 MILLION MAN

Top commercial brokers writing deals as long as phone numbers

Specialist lending
Engaging with credit-impaired clients

Commissions
What brokers and banks have in common

John Price
ASIC commissioner drives innovation

BUILDING A NETWORK THAT DRIVES YOUR SUCCESS

From your pit crew to your butt-kickers, networking should mean much more than cocktails and canapés, speaker and author **Janine Garner** explains

HOW MANY times have you been told, "You really have to network" – that networking is "essential for your growth and personal success"? And yet when it comes to networking many of us are overwhelmed by the pressure of where to start; confused by what appears to be an overcomplicated networking world of opportunities to connect online and offline; and overstretched by the demands on our time.

The truth is, the adage "It's not what you know, it's who you know" has significantly more weight in this 21st century world of busyness, in which jobs are filled before they are advertised; previously unthought-of collaborations appear out of nowhere to create new and competitive markets; forming referral relationships is increasingly hard to do, yet is critical to business growth; and, let's face it, everyone seems to be friends with everyone else on social media.

The *Harvard Business Review* article "Managing Yourself: A Smarter Way To Network" found that "the executives who consistently rank in the top 20% of their companies in both performance and well-being have diverse but select networks … made up of high-quality relationships with people who come from several different spheres and from up and down the corporate hierarchy".

So, the questions to ask are:

- Who is really in your network?
- How much input or influence do they really have on what you're doing or trying to achieve?
- How much do they truly know you and your goals?
- How much can they help you?

Effective networking has to be about the genuine – about the interplay of a select group of people who are working closely together, strategically creating plans to succeed.

Here are three key tips to building a network that works:

Identify your critical few

British anthropologist Robin Dunbar said there was a limit to the number of relationships humans could comfortably maintain – 150, to be precise. He suggested this was the number we could manage to maintain stable relationships with – remembering each other's names, keeping in contact and doing each other favours. Anything more than this, he said, would result in the creation of other subgroups and tribes.

Momentum starts with a significantly smaller circle of influence that you are securely in the centre of, rather than being mixed in somewhere with all the other participants. A small group of people providing quality thinking and behaviours will push you further than you could ever go alone. An effective network bridges a smaller number of more diverse individuals with differing levels of expertise, and varying ages, genders and experience; such networks are cross-functional, cross-hierarchical and cross-industry, delivering balance and diverse thinking.

Identify the quality of people you surround yourself with, not the quantity.

So, who are the right people to have in your network?

Find your personal cheer squad – your promoters

According to research from the Center for Talent Innovation, people with promoters (aka sponsors) are 23% more likely to move up in their careers than those without sponsors. Your own personal cheerleading squad is key to your success. They are by your side through thick and thin, never giving up on you, always dreaming big with you.

Get your support team in place – your pit crew

Like a Formula One pit stop, your pit crew can make or break a race. They add stamina to help you run the marathon of your dreams, navigate complexities and recover from setbacks. They help you learn from mistakes, and keep pushing you on anyway. They celebrate your wins, remind you of your achievements, and keep it real.

There is no doubt that climbing the ladder of success can be a lonely task requiring grit, determination and perseverance. Having the right crew to help you overcome any difficulties and challenges, and keep you mentally tough and balanced, is not just crucial, it's essential.

Become better every day – your teachers

Harvard professor Linda Hill says, "You can't think of something new unless you are being pushed to think in new directions, and you can't do that unless you are engaging with people who have a different viewpoint." A life of continuous learning is essential to growth. The right teachers teach you mastery, guide and stretch your thinking, challenge your ideas, and encourage you to push further and keep learning, because they know that this constant curiosity creates real opportunity for growth, achievement and success.

Accountability buddies are key – your butt-kickers

Linda Galindo, author of *The 85% Solution: How Personal Accountability Guarantees Success*, believes butt-kickers are our secret weapon for success. "Working with a partner prevents the ready-fire-aim approach that a lot of entrepreneurs use," she says.

Love them or hate them, we all need butt-kickers – those individuals that help accelerate the journey, pushing you to do more and holding you accountable for all your actions. Butt-kickers listen to your dreams and accelerate your goals by making sure you stick to them. They hold you accountable for your actions and decisions, and ensure you do what you say you are going to do – and then some.

Be brave and diversify

Step out of your comfort zone, strategically expand your circle of influence, diversify your connections, and explore other people, businesses and experiences. Consciously consider who else you need to learn from, add value to, engage and collaborate with.

Successful networking is about understanding the connections you should be making, as opposed to those you are making. It's about asking who you need to surround yourself with, to inspire you and help you grow. It's about being brave enough to seek out new individuals; being brave enough to connect.

Value exchange is key

Find ways to add value always. Ask yourself if you're doing enough with and for your connections. Consider what more you could do to add value to them and their businesses. Model the behaviour you seek in return. Give knowledge unconditionally, open doors willingly, and share insight to drive continued growth and success for others in order to attract them and engage with them.

It was Richard Branson who said, "Nobody can be successful alone", and in our fast-moving business world we all need a network that works for us. Take a long, hard look at your network and ask yourself:

- Who really matters?
- Who is teaching you mastery and knowledge?
- Who is the key influencer pushing you to be and do more, holding you accountable to your dreams?
- Who is promoting you, acting as your personal cheer squad, inspiring you to become more?
- Who is keeping you balanced and aligned, caring and connecting you with others?

Choose your network wisely. Build a circle around you that allows you to transform and become so much more. MPA

Janine Garner is an internationally acclaimed Fortune 500 mentor, keynote speaker and author of *It's Who You Know: How a Network of 12 Key People Can Fast-track Your Success* (Wiley). Find out more at www.janinegarner.com.au.