Notes

Let’s start by talking about 4 ways you can build a more supportive network. You can find more network information at www.networkweaver.com

The first is what is informally known as networking - think a conference where you go around handing out business cards. You can make this kind of network building more strategic by thinking about your needs. Do you need help with your career? Publications? Research? Or do you need support dealing with problems that come up in your department? Or someone to bounce ideas off of? Encourage people to draw this design on paper and once you have your needs listed, start thinking about specific people you know who could help you - and then reach out to them.

But what we’ve been learning lately is that that approach is a bit limited. Actually you are already part of a vast network, both within and beyond the university, in your neighborhoods and so forth. And if you think of cultivating this larger network you can both open access to much more support, but also make it easier and more likely you can find others to start changing the world in small or large ways. We call this kind of network a self-organizing network.

One way you can start building this kind of network is a practice called your friends friends. A researcher called Mark Granovetter discovered that most people found new jobs - not through their close connections (whose networks were too much like theirs) but by asking their connections who they knew who could help out. In the chat, share if you have gotten something through finding a connection through a friend. “Do you know anyone who has found a publisher for their book?” “Do you know anyone who has an easy pilates class?”

The next technique is called Closing Triangles. Everytime you meet someone new, make sure you find out their interests and needs. Then think of someone in your network who could help that person out or who has a similar interest. For example maybe you know someone who is looking for more interactive ways of using zoom for their classes. You know someone at another university who has done some really innovative things on zoom. You can simply do an email introduction and encourage the two to meet. Or you might join the first conversation to help facilitate the conversation. Now how does this benefit you? Well it creates a culture of helping each other out. What I’ve found is if I model this for others, they will start connecting me to people with my interests.

The final way to build your network is through self-organizing or clusters. This way of meeting your needs is going to be the predominant structure of the 21st century. What this approach is moving us out of the place we were in school - where collaboration was called cheating - or where you are just looking out for yourself and moves you to a place where you think, “I have this need but so do others, and if we collaborate we can all meet our needs in a much better way.”
So instead of you thinking how you can get your paper published, you pull together a group of 5 or 7 people who are all struggling with this. Brian Uzzi who researched small groups found that the most successful had a few people who had worked together before but also included new people with diverse perspectives. Some will be more experienced, some are marginalized people who are often left out and by bringing them in you not only help correct long standing injustices but in most cases are bringing in the source of new perspectives.

The way it works. Networks have stages. Often a network starts where people know only a few others. Often a group, like this one, begins holding activities like this or sending out information. But the real breakthrough comes when people in the network start forming many different clusters. Then if you have a way to share what you are doing with the rest of the network, you become a very healthy network where everyone is well supported in their work and life.

There are 4 basic types of clusters, As we go through them, think of how you could experiment by trying out one of them, The first is a popup - this is a one time impromptu meeting. Some people call them coffee chats. It may or may not have a topic but people use them to get to know new people and share what they are doing or thinking about.

The next is a bit more focused and may involve a number of sessions. Examples of this are book clubs, discussion groups.

The third is really important and I’d love to see people organizing a lot more of these, This is peer support. Often someone has a challenge in their work and they call out for people to come to help give them advice about that challenge. You can find a simple agenda for a peer support group in the resources www.networkweaver.com.

The final type of cluster is the self-organized project. This is when you decide you want to do something - anything from working on a problem in your department, writing a paper with others, or planning a virtual party or yoga class - and you find others who also want to do this, then meet until you accomplish your goal. Important when you form a group that you reach out beyond your usual suspects so you are getting new ideas.

Now how do you find people for your projects? If you don't have a discussion space online where you can meet and call out to find people with similar interests, you just need to use a snowball approach where you ask your friends and acquaintances if they know of someone who might be interested, talk to them, and again ask them if they know of others who are interested,

So today we are just going to give you a flavor of clustering in the hopes that you this out in something you are doing.

We are going to use jamboard. Just click on the link in the chat and use the post it notes over on the left. Click on the postit note, pick the color, and write in the notes something you would like to talk with others about. We are then going to cluster them and try to pick 4 or 5 topics. Then we'll put those into the breakout room groups and you can pick which one you want to be in - if
your topic is not selected, I hope you’ll be willing to join a small group and maybe take on the facilitation or note taking role.

Before we open the breakout rooms, I’d like to go over what to do in the rooms. First we have a link we will put in the chat for you to take notes. When you get in the room, have people volunteer to be a facilitator - to keep the conversation moving, a notetaker to write in the google doc, and a timekeeper to figure out how much time each person can talk. Do a first go round of introductions and then talk more about the topic, how you can support each other, etc. You may want to share your names and emails in the chat, and have everyone copy them so you can stay in touch.

Reflection

In the chat or verbally, share your reactions to your group experience.

Also share how you are thinking of experimenting with any of the ideas presented in this session.

Don’t forget if you are interested in more network resources go to www.neteworkweaver.com and the free resources section. If you want to really dive in check out the hard copy or pdf version of the NW Handbook (or the shorter version Intro to NW).