

**Leveraging Your Networks**

**Café Overview**

The Leveraging Your Networks Café is a short blended learning experience oriented around the concepts and skills found in the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic. The Leveraging Your Networks topic will help managers:

* *Create a map of a network and assess the network*
* *Identify ways to strengthen a network*
* *Initiate and develop reciprocal relationships within a network*
* *Leverage their networks to achieve personal, team, and organizational goals*
* *Apply strategies for sustaining networks in the long term*

The learning experience has three components:

*60 to 90 minutes 60 minutes Ongoing*

Part 1: Pre-work (self-paced, individual)

Before the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Review the following online lessons from the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic:
  + Understand Networks
  + Map and Assess a Network
  + Strengthen Your Networks
  + Develop Relationships
  + Put Your Networks to Use
  + Sustain Your Networks
* Complete the practice activity “Map and Assess One of Your Networks” in the “Map and Assess a Network” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic
* Complete the tool “Worksheet for Assessing Network Diversity” in the “Strengthen Your Networks” lesson of the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic

Part 2: Café session (live, group)

The Café session represents the core element of the learning experience. The session provides an opportunity for managers to:

* Exchange ideas and questions with others
* Discuss the context of how concepts and skills apply in the workplace
* Practice and begin application of those concepts and skills
* Build momentum and support for applying the concepts and skills in the workplace

The Café session focuses specifically on the following concepts and tasks from the Leveraging Your Networks topic:

* Assess your networks
* Diversify your networks
* Sustain your networks

Facilitating the Café session as outlined should take approximately 60 minutes. If the facilitator prefers a shorter session or wishes to spend more time on a specific concept or activity, he or she may want to cover only those concepts and activities that are most relevant to the group.

| SECTION | ACTIVITY | TIME |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | * Show icebreaker question while participants are arriving to the session. **(QUESTION: WHAT ONE OR TWO WORDS MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBE YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD NETWORKING?)** * Introduce facilitators. * Review tips for using technology during the session. * Debrief icebreaker question. * Set context: Do you tend to think networking isn’t worth the time? Or worse, that it’s really just political game-playing? Whatever you may think or feel, it’s actually a vital skill—and as a manager, you can’t do your job without it. Why is the ability to build and sustain networks so important? It’s because it’s how work gets done in today’s business environment. And it has become more crucial than ever because of how organizations are changing. * Review session objectives. | 10 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Assess your networks** | * Review definitions of “network” and “networking”:   + Explore the types of networks and the importance of networking in business (“It’s how work gets done”).   + Highlight the key purposes of networks (operational, strategic, developmental) in organizations. * Debrief the practice activity “Map and Assess One of Your Networks.” Participants:   + Review the key questions addressed in the practice activity as a group:     - What surprised you about the patterns and clusters in your network?     - Is your network broad enough?     - Are you using your network to its full potential?   + Draw conclusions from the exercise:     - Share examples of opportunities to improve your network.     - Discuss the ways in which you can leverage insights from your network map to strengthen your network by seeking out “superconnectors,” balancing weak and strong ties, and evaluating your relationships to ensure diversity.     - Make clear that there is no “perfect” network pattern, noting that even the best networkers expand and contract their connections over time based on mutual need. | 17 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Diversify your networks** | * Debrief the tool “Worksheet for Assessing Network Diversity.” Participants:   + Undertake a short in-session quiz to illuminate gaps in their network.   + Consider opportunities to diversify:     - How do networks benefit from new members who do not have the same experiences, backgrounds, and worldviews?     - How might networks be expanded to include a broader range of members?       * What methods have you used to develop your network thus far?       * How might you need to augment your approach? | 12 minutes |
| **Skill focus: Sustain your networks** | * Facilitate discussion activity on a network relationship scenario. Participants:   + Review a short "What would you do?" scenario related to the challenges of maintaining connections and developing more strategic network relationships.   + Discuss the importance of reciprocity in maintaining network relationships.   + Discuss challenges in sustaining connections (e.g., time).   + Apply insights to their own business and roles. * Review strategies for sustaining networks over time, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a long-term view. | 16 minutes |
| **Applying what you’ve learned** | * Review session objectives and skill areas discussed. * Review directions for completing the On-the-Job section of the online Harvard ManageMentor topic, including the action plan. * Close the session. | 5 minutes |

Part 3: Application (self-paced, individual)

After the live Café session, participants are expected to complete the following assignments:

* Complete the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic. The section provides learners with an opportunity to choose a skill to focus on and create an action plan for applying and developing the skill. *Note:* If your organization does not include the On-the-Job section in your configuration of Harvard ManageMentor, ask participants to think of two things they can do over the next 90 days to further apply and develop their skills in this area.
* Execute their action plan over a specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days).
* After the specified time frame (e.g., 60 or 90 days), access the online On-the-Job section in the Harvard ManageMentor Leveraging Your Networks topic to update the action plan and reflect on the experience.