



Bonner Curriculum

Building Career Networks: An Introduction

Overview:

Too often job seekers place little attention on the value of recognizing, building, and accessing both personal and professional networks to gain insight about a potential job or even to get a foot in the door of a sought-after organization. The fact is our entire world is a series of networks that make one global network. If we can find a link between ourselves and someone on the other side of the world (as the theory *Six Degrees of Separation* suggests) then we can find a link to a potential job that may be in the same community, city, state, or country as we may be. This workshop will begin this crucial process of identifying networks of both professional and personal natures to see how you may be closer your dream job than you may have guessed.

Category:

Career and Professional Skills

Level:

Mid-level

Recommended

Bonner Sequence:

This training is recommended for Bonner students during the sophomore through senior year, ideally before senior year but possibly revisited early in that timeframe. It supports a focus on preparing for career paths and exploring vocation.

expectation	explore	experience	example	expertise

VALUES: civic engagement, others as pertaining to career paths in the nonprofit sector

Type:

Structured activity suitable for retreat or regular

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

- To create both personal and professional power maps to use in networking for potential career connections or other opportunities

- To understand the nature and value of network planning — and a simple method for doing it
- To reflect on their own current networks and gain a deeper understanding of how to expand

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens

How to Prepare:

Start by becoming familiar with the entire workshop. Have all supporting materials ready to use. Also, create two power maps of your own to use as examples, following the methods recommended in the guide. You will use these to illustrate the method during the session.

If you need additional facilitation ideas, consult facilitation workshop guides of the Civic Engagement Curriculum.

How to Do/Brief Outline:

This 1-hour outline has the following parts:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Introduction | suggested time 5 minutes |
| 2. Building a Personal Network | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 3. Power Mapping | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 4. Making the Connection | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5. Closing | suggested time 5 minutes |

Part 1) Introduction

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Open the session by introducing yourself and your role/position, and background in the nonprofit sector (or other relevant background).

Next, have each participant introduce themselves to the group. It's helpful to making sure each person includes their name, school, major(s) (if applicable), anything that they are passionate about, and what their dream career might be.

Proceed by explaining the focus of the session:

- The purpose of this workshop is to help you think about networks that you could access in finding a job or internship. We call this process networking. Networking is a buzz-word that's a bit overused and rubs some people the wrong way, but you can

think of it as a fairly simple two-step process - first getting access to organizations and individuals who can help you on your job search, and then building your network by gaining access to more contacts for each individual you meet.

- Networking is important because it will help you gain valuable insight into your job search and desired career path from people who are already doing the work. More importantly, the majority of jobs are **not** advertised. Therefore the best way to get into an organization is through using personal connections. Networking creates those connections that will help you find out about new openings before others do, or even lead you to create a job for yourself in a given organization.
- Nonprofits can be less visible than businesses, and networking is often not a common practice, where supposedly the larger mission is more important than one person's individual goals. But this can be an advantage if you are willing to do the work, because most of your fellow job seekers will not be networking.
- However, to begin networking, you must identify the often-unrecognized networks you are a member of.

Part 2) Building a Personal Network

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Now have each participant take out a piece of paper and a pen to begin this section. Instruct them write what their dream job in the nonprofit sector is (*or have them write any job they dream most of*).

Next, have them draw a circle in the center of the paper, keeping in mind that it has to be large enough to brainstorm ideas inside, yet small enough to be able to draw several more circles around the original to eventually create a concentric circle of ideas.

However in the original circle, have each participant brainstorm all the clubs, groups, organizations, communities, and churches they are members of. Give them 5 minutes to complete this.

After 5 minutes, have them draw another circle around the first. In the space around the smaller circle, instruct them to brainstorm all they consider to be the leaders in the groups in which they belong or are connected. Again, allot 5 minutes for this activity.

After this activity, have the group draw one last circle around the last one. In this space, have the group brainstorm other clubs, organizations, groups, or communities the leaders in your group might be affiliated with. Again, allot 5 minutes for this activity.

After the last brainstorm, debrief the exercise with the following questions:

- I. What surprised you about your personal network?

2. Is there some connection between yourself and another organization that you might want to pursue the job you are interested in with?
3. How feasible is it now to use a path in your network to gather more information about a job?

Part 3) Power Mapping

Suggested time: 20

Instructing the group to remember the job they are interested in, have them flip their paper over to use the back for the next activity.

Now, have participants write one internship, job, or volunteer placement that they have had recently with a nonprofit organization. Participants should draw a circle around the placement.

Next, instruct participants to draw a larger circle around the smaller one. Explain that within this circle, they should brainstorm the names of people key people in the organization you worked with (i.e. *executive director, directors, coordinators, board of trustee members, etc.*) Allot 5 minutes for this exercise.

After 5 minutes, instruct the group to draw another circle around the last one. Within this new circle, brainstorm other organizations or groups that are affiliated or could be affiliated with the organization you worked with. Again allot 5 minutes for this exercise.

After 5 minutes, instruct participants to draw one last circle around the last. In this space, brainstorm as many of the leaders and key people of the organizations and groups from the last brainstorm. Again, allot 5 minutes for this exercise.

After the last brainstorm, debrief the exercise with the following questions:

1. What surprised you about your power map?
2. Is there some connection between yourself and another organization that you might want to pursue the job you are interested in with?
3. How feasible is it now to use a path in your network to gather more information about a job?

Part 4) Making the Connection

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Explain that each participant now has 2 networking maps based upon personal and professional networks.

Now instruct the participants to look at both networks to figure out *relational power lines*. *Relational power lines* are lines drawn to connect people and institutions that have relations to each other.

For example, a participant may have interned at a local environment watch organization, whose executive director formerly worked at Greenpeace, an organization where she still has contacts. Therefore, a relational power line could start with the participants internship, progress through the executive director, to Greenpeace, and finally to key administrators.

Explain that they should draw as many lines as possible in both networks. Allot 7 minutes for this activity.

Part 5) Closing

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Explain to the group that they have developed to very useful tools to start or continue their job search for their dream jobs. Make sure to point that to begin networking, simply get in contact with the closest person to them in their relational power lines in either network.

Finally close by having each participant share something that they learned which will prove helpful in their career search.