



## **Networking: The Power in Making Lasting Connections**

**Skills and Professional Development**





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## CHEAT SHEET

- **Internal tactics.** The four tactics that you can deploy internally to ensure success while networking include leveraging key stakeholders, seeking assignments, being a good corporate citizen, and partnering with human resources.
- **The external network.** When you are ready to move to a new company, leverage key networks, including social media, legal associations, and recruitment agencies to improve your visibility.
- **Speak up.** To establish yourself as an expert in the field, participate in speaking engagements through panels, workshops, and CLEs. If you do not feel that you know enough about the subject matter, volunteer to moderate the panel.
- **No stone unturned.** Non-legal associations can provide fertile grounds for developing relationships and expanding one's network beyond legal organizations. Consider joining a board to meet potential connections and broaden your experience with board governance

“Sometimes, idealistic people are put off by the whole business of networking as something tainted by flattery and the pursuit of selfish advantage,” says the Hon. Sonia Sotomayor, associate justice of the US Supreme Court. “But virtue in obscurity is rewarded only in heaven. To succeed in this world, you have to be known to people.”

Providing visibility for your skills, accomplishments, and career goals are common reasons to develop a network. You gain this visibility by connecting with people you know and those you should know. Networking, therefore, is not a short-term play to collect the most business cards. It is a long-term play to develop mutually beneficial and lasting relationships to advance your professional goals.

Networking requires time. Knowing what professional goals you want to achieve will help you develop a networking strategy and plan your time accordingly. What are your goals? Do you want to establish yourself as a subject matter expert in your practice area? Are you seeking a promotion? Are looking to move to a new job with a different company? Once you determine the purpose of your networking, you can then determine which tactics to use to execute your networking strategy.

Networking tactics fall into three categories: (1) interacting with people, (2) focused activities, and (3) leveraging technology. We have grouped these tactics into two buckets: tactics to be leveraged (1) within your company, or (2) in the broader legal community. We provide a brief description of each tactic.

Doing your job is table stakes. Networking enables you to navigate within your organization to remain relevant as well as to advance. Four tactics you can deploy internally include:

1. **Leverage key stakeholders:** Identifying and developing relationships with colleagues who are decision-makers or influencers on the work that you do or want to do.
2. **Seek assignments:** Seeking and doing well on key assignments will provide you with visibility and credibility to your colleagues beyond your immediate team.
3. **Be a good corporate citizen:** Working on a task force or committee that advances your company's non-business goals (e.g., pro bono, diversity, and inclusion, morale within the company) can introduce you to colleagues across the organization and show your commitment to taking on tasks beyond your work.

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4. **Partner with HR:** HR is a resource beyond resolving issues with colleagues. The HR team is also responsible for creating tools for employee development.

Your external network helps you bring insights and resources to your company. When you are ready to move to a new company, you can leverage this network to gain insights, resources, and job opportunities. Six tactics you can deploy include:

5. **Seek speaking engagements:** You improve your visibility and establish yourself as a subject-matter expert by speaking on panels, workshops, and CLEs.
6. **Use social media — LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is more than a virtual Rolodex. LinkedIn is your online professional presence and forum for you to showcase your skills.
7. **Use social media — Twitter:** Twitter allows you to actively engage with an audience to showcase your thought leadership and understanding of relevant issues in your industry and practice area.
8. **Participate in legal associations:** Bar associations and other legal organizations are networking and skill-building forums.
9. **Participate in non-legal associations:** These associations allow you to volunteer or partake in activities that you care about and that broaden your network beyond the legal profession. Lawyers are not the only ones who know about legal opportunities in companies.
10. **Befriend a recruiter:** A recruiter can help you prepare your résumé for your next move and keep you abreast of job opportunities. The relationship is not one-way — you should make sure to help your recruiter by identifying talent and recruiting opportunities.

With this overview of the tactics, let's walk through four case studies that illustrate how these tactics can be used.

## Case study one: The “seeking to move in-house” lawyer

Stella is a 33-year-old associate at a Top-50 law firm. She has spent years billing long hours at the firm, working weekends and late nights, and having numerous vacations cancelled. Stella is going to be up for partner in the next year, but she is not even sure she wants it. Coming out of law school, Stella wanted to get training and experience — and perhaps pay off some of her law school loans — so she accepted an offer at a firm with the plan to stay for only a few years. Now in her seventh year at the firm, Stella is ready for a change. She enjoys working with her clients, and she always wanted to go in-house one day. However, in-house jobs are not that easy to find.

### Participate in legal associations

Many associates spend years focusing on billing at their law firms and practically no time on networking. Stella has to play catch-up. One way Stella can make connections is through joining bar or legal associations, as well as attending their events in order to meet and develop relationships with a broad array of lawyers. It is important to be strategic when deciding which legal association or associations to join. There are a plethora of options — national, state, diversity, and specialty — and each offers different networking options. National associations may offer a wider network across a broader geographic swath. Local bar associations offer a more focused network in the same city or area. A specialty bar association may offer networking opportunities in a practice area. Lastly, diverse bar associations offer networking opportunities to find mentors and sponsors who share the same ethnic, racial, or cultural background, and who can provide not only helpful career advice but also useful insights into in-house corporations interested in recruiting diverse candidates.

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Once Stella joins a bar association, she should make sure she becomes an active participant. Most bar associations have numerous committees (e.g., litigation committee, women's committee, pro bono committee), and joining one can help Stella meet members by working together. If she takes on a leadership role for a committee or a project, she can demonstrate her management and project planning abilities to the other members. Finally, Stella can ensure that she is networking as broadly and effectively as possible by attending networking events, or by organizing such events herself if she is not finding enough opportunities to do so. In particular, if Stella is looking to network with in-house counsel, she may plan an event involving in-house counsel.

## **Participate in non-legal associations**

Non-legal associations can often provide fertile grounds for developing relationships, and it is a good idea to expand one's network beyond just legal organizations. Mentoring and volunteer organizations often have boards composed of a diverse group of in-house counsel, law firm partners, public interest lawyers, and senior government lawyers. Joining a board can help Stella meet potential connections as well as broaden her experience in board governance.

If she decides to join a non-legal organization, Stella should choose something that she feels passionate about. Not only will this help develop relationships with other board members who share her interests, but she will be doing something she loves as well.

## **Seek speaking engagements**

Stella can showcase her knowledge and expertise by taking on speaking engagements or seeking them out. In the bar associations, she should consider speaking on panels — whether it is agreeing to be on others' panels or organizing one herself — because panels present an opportunity to showcase not only her knowledge and expertise but her speaking and presentation skills. Even if Stella does not feel completely confident about a particular subject matter or is hesitant about presenting herself as an expert or authority on a topic, she can volunteer to moderate a panel. By moderating a panel of in-house or general counsel, she will have the opportunity to get to know the participants while preparing. A good moderator can demonstrate their ability to manage and lead the discussion, while making sure to keep the panel on time and well paced.

## **Case study two: Seeking a promotion to an officer position**

Jack is a 40-year-old lawyer who has worked at a mid-sized corporation for 13 years. He began his career at an IP boutique firm after graduation. After five years, the next step in his career path was working in-house. He started as a counsel then advanced to senior counsel, and then to assistant vice president. He has strong relationships with his business partners in the IP organization and they have come to rely on him as a trusted advisor. He does not manage other lawyers, but leads teams on projects that have provided him with opportunities to informally manage people.

He is interested in becoming the vice president and unit head of the IP team when the position becomes available. He wants to stay with the company and is not considering external opportunities. He works very hard and has received strong ratings. During his last review, his manager, the current vice president and unit head of the IP team, gave him the following feedback: "If you want to continue to advance in the company, you need to do more networking." As the unit head of the IP team, Jack would be the lawyer for the head of technology. He is familiar with this person, but has not worked directly with her. Jack accepted the feedback, but, after the meeting, wondered: "How do I network

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when I have so many other things to do?”

## **Seek assignments**

Jack needs to find ways to be on the radar of the head of technology. She needs to become familiar with his work product and his ability to provide legal advice. He should seek assignments that will allow him to work more closely with her or work with people who work closely with her. It will also broaden the number of relationships he has in the technology organization beyond those on the IP team. He should speak to his manager about obtaining these assignments.

## **Be a good corporate citizen: Join a committee**

Senior leaders are often executive sponsors of key corporate initiatives. Jack should learn which corporate initiatives the head of technology is sponsoring and volunteer to work on a task force or committee supporting this initiative. If possible, he should find a leadership position that would provide greater contact with the sponsor.

## **Leverage key stakeholders**

Jack’s manager is one of the key stakeholders who will impact his ability to progress within the organization. His manager has already told him he needs to network — improve his visibility in the organization — to continue to advance. He needs to let his manager know that he is interested in the role and discuss ways he can prepare for it. He should also ask his manager who are other key stakeholders that he should get to know.

## **Partner with HR**

Being a unit head involves managing a team of associates. In addition to talking to his manager, Jack can talk to his HR business partner about the skills and core competencies needed to be a manager, and what training opportunities are available to learn those skills.

## **Use social media: LinkedIn**

As the advisor to a senior leader, Jack needs to demonstrate that he keeps abreast of key legal and business issues affecting similar companies. Jack can use his LinkedIn page to showcase this acumen. He will need to extend invitations to key people in his company. He should make sure he: (1) has a current professional picture; (2) has current information in his profile; and (3) joins groups related to his practice area to learn key legal and business issues.

## **Case study three: Advancing from a VP to an SVP**

Regina, 45, began her career as an associate in a mid-sized law firm. She left the firm after five years when she knew that she would not make partner. Regina learned about an opening for associate general counsel at XXX Retail Corporation from a law school classmate. Regina interviewed for the role and received an offer for the in-house position of associate general counsel. Regina accepted the offer and quickly acclimated to the culture and the role seamlessly. Over the next 12 years, her legal career excelled with promotions to director, associate vice president, and currently vice president of litigation. Although Regina has excellent performance reviews and is well known to her legal colleagues, she has not been promoted to senior vice president (SVP).

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## **Leverage key stakeholders**

Regina should identify the role and department where she would like to work, research the department, determine the “common denominator” for the key stakeholders, and schedule short introductory one-on-one meetings with them. Regina should discuss her career aspirations with key stakeholders and ask them for their advice and feedback. If Regina successfully seeks key stakeholders’ permission to meet regularly, she will soon be on her way to creating champions and mentors with key influencers in the company.

## **Assignment choices**

Although Regina knows that she is qualified for the SVP, business and legal affairs’ opening, she recognizes that some of the business leaders are not familiar with her performance and business acumen. Regina would benefit from volunteering and collaborating with business leads on new product rollouts and launches. These projects support the development of new work relationships, permanent assignments, and the sharing of business information.

## **Being a good corporate citizen**

Internal affinity groups can showcase leadership, creativity, and forward thinking that can improve a company’s performance and result in awards and recognition. Regina should consider what groups she would like to join and take on a leadership role. Most companies support affinity groups and recognize the value of their ideas and work experience in the business. The incorporation of ideas from affinity groups’ into marketing plans is often useful.

## **Seek speaking engagements**

Speaking engagements are excellent opportunities for Regina to showcase her talents both internally and externally. Regina may want to consider speaking at a law school, bar association, or community organization. It is important that Regina is strategic in the selection of opportunities to ensure that her business acumen and leadership is showcased. This path could lead to other speaking engagements, resulting in Regina becoming a subject-matter expert and thereby increasing her visibility.

## **Using social media: LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is one of the most well known professional networking sites. It not only encourages you to create your professional profile, but it is also used by recruiters to globally locate talent, reconnect with colleagues, create groups, and post jobs. Many companies encourage employees to create an account. Regina should ensure her profile is current and linked to key associates in her company.

## **Participate in legal associations**

At this point in her career, Regina is likely a member of multiple bar associations but may not chair a committee or hold a leadership position. She should select a committee that enhances her skillset, challenges her, and promotes collaboration. Many companies encourage employees to join, speak, and take on leadership roles in bar associations, and community organizations as part of their “investment into the community.” Companies often publicize this activity in programs, newsletters, websites, etc. They also sponsor conferences, pay employee fees, travel costs, and association



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dues. As a vice president, Regina should volunteer to speak at a conference even if she has to call the organizer and request to participate on a panel. This is an excellent opportunity for Regina to get outside of her lane. This highlights her growth, confidence, depth, and capacity to learn something new.

## **Befriend a recruiter**

Regina may consider speaking with professional colleagues and friends to identify executive recruiter referrals. It never hurts to be proactive in establishing external relationships outside of your present employment. This requires Regina to be persistent and check-in with the recruiters regularly because they are often inundated with calls and emails about opportunities. Many recruiters will assist in editing and reviewing your résumé, CV, and/or profile summary if you are selected as part of the applicant pool sourced to their client. Regina may be sought out after as a result of her corporate litigation career. The SVP title is a popular level for retail companies to retain executive recruiters; therefore it is career appropriate for Regina.

## **Case study four: Seeking opportunities outside of your company**

Francis is a 50-year-old lawyer who has worked at a Fortune 100 company for 14 years as a real estate transaction lawyer. As a result, Francis has worked closely with his business partners to diversify the company's business portfolio and expand into tax incentives real estate development. However, despite his success in helping to advance his business partners' goals and his passion for his work, Francis does not see many opportunities for advancement at the company. The legal department is a flat organization and promotional opportunities are based on accomplishment as well as business need and budget. At his last review, his manager praised him for his work and active partnership with the business, but said that the business did not see a need for another senior lawyer, and budgets did not allow for creating a more senior legal position. Francis is exploring his career options, including external options.

While early in his career at the company, Francis decided to join a nonprofit board that specializes in mixed-income residential retail developments. Francis learned about the board opening from one of his business partners. He has served on the board for the past four years. He was recently elected to be chair of the board. Throughout his service, Francis has demonstrated his business knowledge, real estate development expertise, and willingness to take on projects to advance the goals of the organization.

## **Participate in non-legal associations**

Francis has already taken this step. He can leverage this network in two ways. First, he can use his fellow board members as a resource. With his years of dedicated service and relationships with the board, Francis can now leverage these relationships to seek feedback, insight, and connections to advance his search for a new position. Next, due to his commitment and service, the board has now entrusted him with a vital, high-impact, and visible role — the board chair. Using this outside public endorsement of his value and skill, Francis should leverage it to promote and communicate his ability to take on a leadership position at another company. Specifically, he can say that his work and his new position: (1) sharpens his professional skills; (2) enhances his credibility as an expert in the real estate/economic development industry; (3) increases his emotional intelligence and collaboration skills; (4) expands his career experience; (5) grows professional relationships; (6) allows him to gain insight into new industry standards/areas; (7) provides more business interaction by contributing to

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the organization's strategic plan, rather than legal problem solving; and (8) offers insight into the inner workings of an organization and different business strategies.

## **Seek speaking engagements**

As chair of the board, Francis now has a solid performance record that exhibits his ability to use his expertise in a manner that substantively contributes to the organization's mission and goals. Francis should regularly accept speaking engagements on behalf of the organization to showcase that skill.

## **Use of social media: Twitter**

Francis should use his Twitter to share the good work of his organization. First, it will advance the mission of the organization and its commitment to the community. In the process, Francis will brand himself as a leader, as a subject-matter expert in the area, and as an advocate for the community.

Networking is not about working a room to get everyone's business cards. Networking does not have to be a challenge. Networking is developing relationships with colleagues (known and soon to be known) to help you achieve your professional goals. "Your network," explains Reid Hoffman, CEO of LinkedIn, "is the people who want to help you, and you want to help them, and that's really powerful."

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