

Optum

Build Your Network

Networking Experience Toolkit

Bridge

Leadership growth at your fingertips



Contents

1. Why network?
2. Clarifying your career goals
3. Best practices
4. 3 steps to building your network

Before you get started, be sure to save this document to your computer and save your responses as you go.

“

“If we create networks with the sole intention of getting something, we won’t succeed. We can’t pursue the benefits of networks; the benefits ensue from investments in meaningful activities and relationships.”

Adam Grant

Why network?



Networking is building and nurturing professional relationships in order to achieve your goals and support the goals of others.



Leaders across Optum agree a strong network is a critical factor in advancing your career in the organization.



The challenge is, how do you find time to build a network across the organization, when your job requires a laser-like focus on your clinic and team?



In this guide, you will learn to quickly leverage the resources you already have, and take small, yet meaningful steps to build intentional, strong connections at work.

Clarifying your career goals

Before building your network, it's important define your career goals and clarify what you want to gain, as well as what you have to offer your network.

Answer these 6 questions to prepare for your networking conversations. *Continued on next page.*

1. What is your health care why? What makes passionate about the work you do?

2. What are your top two strengths and how are you using them in your current role?

3. What's a recent challenge you've faced in your leadership role, and how did you overcome it?

Clarifying your career goals

Continued

4. In 2 years, where do you want to be in the organization and what impact do you want to be having?

5. What knowledge and experience will you need to gain to get there?

6. What connections will you need to form in order to get there?

Best practices



Listening

The best way to build good rapport is by practicing empathetic listening. As you get to know someone, remember to listen for facts, feelings, and values.



Give before you receive

When meeting with people, ask what they're currently working on and what challenges they're experiencing. Follow up with suggestions, resources, or an offer to help.



Be clear about your goals

Share clearly how you are hoping to grow in the organization. Let people know the knowledge and experiences you'd like to gain to get there.



Ask for support

If you are not sure how to identify individuals to add to your network, ask your manager, a peer or mentor for support. Ask them how you can find individuals to connect with.

The “*like me*” bias

Leaders have the power to cultivate a culture that questions bias, embraces diversity and improves healthy equity.

Before you begin selecting individuals to add to your network, consider your approach.

Individuals tend to gravitate towards those who are like themselves (i.e., race, age, economic background, sexual orientation, education, gender identity, etc.).

This may influence how leaders interact with and support those unlike themselves. It also explains why we see more diversity at the bottom of organizations than at the top.

Answer the questions on the next page to help prepare you to build a diverse network.



The “like me” bias

- > Does the concept of the “like me” bias resonate with you? How common do you think this is at Optum?
- > What kind of impact does the “like-me” bias have on the marginalized or underrepresented employee groups in the organization?
- > What actions can you take to ensure you build a diverse network?

[Add response here]

A photograph of two healthcare professionals, likely nurses or doctors, in a clinical setting. They are both wearing scrubs and glasses. The woman on the left is wearing blue scrubs and has a stethoscope around her neck. The woman on the right is wearing green scrubs. They are both smiling and looking at a tablet computer held by the woman in green. The background is a bright, out-of-focus hospital hallway.

“

“The most meaningful way to succeed is to help *others* succeed.”

Adam Grant

3 steps to **Build Your Network**

Now that you've clarified your goals and reviewed some best networking practices, you are ready to get started!

You will identify one person in each category below to meet with over the next 6 weeks.
The following pages provide you with the steps and resources to help you make it happen.

1. Reconnect with a peer

Building a network of peers across the organization provides you the opportunity to exchange fresh ideas, perspectives, and solutions. Networking does not require you to reach out to strangers. In fact, some of your most helpful connections are probably with people you already know.

2. Learn from a leader

Networking with leaders you admire in the organization has several benefits. You can learn best practices to incorporate into your own leadership practice, gain exposure to leaders and departments across the organization, and over time, put yourself on the radar for future opportunities.

3. Invest in talent

An important, yet often overlooked, networking goal is building your talent pipeline. As a leader, you should be spending some time meeting with and investing in up-and-coming talent. That way, when you find yourself with an open role on your team, you'll have a list of talented people to draw from. In addition, you can gain fresh ideas and perspectives from people newer to the industry or organization.

Step 1: Reconnect with a peer

List 5 peers in the organization that you want to build a deeper professional relationship with. If you haven't already, challenge yourself to think beyond those who are “like me”.

	What I <i>professionally</i> know about them	What I <i>personally</i> know about them	What I want to learn
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			

Build your network

Step 1: Reconnect with a peer

Now, reach out to one of these connections to schedule a 30-minute meeting for this week or the following.

PEER NAME:

Questions to ask

What's been the highlight of your week so far?

MEETING DATE:

What's the biggest project or initiative you're currently working on?

What's the biggest challenge you're currently faced with?

How can I help?

I've been challenged with **X** lately, what have you done when you've run into that issue?

Who else in the organization would you recommend I connect with, because they've had a significant impact on you and your career?

Follow up and next steps

Build your network

Step 1: Reconnect with a peer

Use the optional email below when reaching out. Feel free to customize the template to your style and needs.

Email template

Hi [Peer's first name],

I hope you are doing well and enjoying your week so far!

I've always admired the way you handled yourself as a professional and would appreciate an opportunity to hear how things are going. I am hoping to meet with individuals like yourself to share ideas, perspectives, solutions, and to generally stay connected. Would you be open to a 30-minute [1:1/video/coffee] meeting in the coming week(s)?

Please let me know if you are interested and which days/times you are available, and I will send you a calendar invite for a time that works for us both.

Thank you, [peer's first name]. I look forward to hearing from you!

Best,

[Your name]

Step 2: Learn from a leader

List 5 leaders in the organization that you admire and want to learn from.
If you haven't already, challenge yourself to think beyond those who are "like me".

	What I <i>professionally</i> know about them	What I <i>personally</i> know about them	What I want to learn
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			

Build your network

Step 2: Learn from a leader

Now, reach out to one of these connections to schedule a 30-minute meeting for this week or the following.

LEADER NAME:

Questions to ask

What is one leadership quality or practice that has led you to success in your career?

MEETING DATE:

What's the biggest challenge you're currently faced with?

How can I help?

I'm interested in learning more about **X** function / department, who would you recommend I meet with?

Follow up and next steps

Build your network

Step 2: Learn from a leader

Use the optional email below when reaching out. Feel free to customize the template to your style and needs.

Email template

Hi [Leader's first name],

My name is [Your name], and I am a [title] with [department name]. I have great respect for the work you have done for [organization name]. I am currently working on a leadership initiative titled [initiative/program title], and I would appreciate the opportunity to hear your perspective and learn more about your leadership journey.

Would you be open to having a 15- or 30-minute [1:1/video/coffee] meeting to connect? If you are interested and able, I will send a calendar invite. Please let me know some days and times that work for you.

Thank you, [Leader's name]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[Your name]

Step 3: Invest in talent

List 5 up-and-coming individuals that you want to connect with. Pay attention to who you see going above and beyond, ask your peers who's made an impression on them and look at LinkedIn connections. If you haven't already, challenge yourself to think beyond those who are “like me”.

	What I <i>professionally</i> know about them	What I <i>personally</i> know about them	What I want to learn
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			
NAME:			
ROLE:			

Build your network

Step 3: Invest in talent

Now, reach out to one of these connections to schedule a 15- to 30-minute meeting for this week or the following.

INDIVIDUAL NAME:

Questions to ask

What inspires you at work and in your professional life?

MEETING DATE:

Where would you like to see your career go? What are your ambitions?

What are the experiences and skills you need to get there?

How can I help?

I'm currently working through x challenge – how might you approach it?

Follow up and next steps

Step 3: Invest in talent

Use the optional email below when reaching out. Feel free to customize the template to your style and needs.

Email template

Hi [Teammate's first name],

My name is [Your name] and I'm working on [team name] within [organization name]. My team is currently looking for a new [job title]. I have heard great things about your work, and I would like to connect with you on this potential opportunity.

To provide some insight, here is a high-level overview of the position:

- [Brief description of role]
- [Responsibilities and duties]

If this role seems like a good fit, let's set up a [15-/30-] minute 1:1 meeting to discuss more details. Please note, if this role is not something you are looking for, I would still appreciate the time to connect to discuss your career goals and interests. You are an excellent asset to the [organization name] team and we want to ensure your development is continued.

Please let me know if you would like to connect and some days and times that work for you. Then, I'll send a calendar invite on a day and time that works for us both.

Thank you, [Teammate's name]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[Your name]

Next steps



Follow up

After each meeting, acknowledge your gratitude with a thank you, suggestion, resource, or offer to help.



Follow through

Ensure you fulfill on your offers to help or support with those you meet.



Reach out

Now, connect with someone else from your list or based on a recommendation you received in your first round of meetings.



“

“Networking is more about *farming*
than it is about hunting.”

Ivan Misner

**Dive into your next
leadership development
opportunity**

Learn from a Mentor

A *Bridge* leadership experience
available at bridge.optum.com

Thank you for working to
Build Your Network.

Share your reflections on this experience with txdfedback@optum.com

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