

Networking your way into work.  
How to give in order to . . . . . get!

Wednesday afternoon, a warm pleasant day in the spring. We were sitting in the garden having a beer and discussing the college, our grades, the world and anything in between. 7 students sharing a house. Everyone was getting a round of beers on turns - except Roel. When it was his turn, he went to his room. And he always did that! He always ducked! I hated that. I really really hated that.

So the next time we were sitting in the garden, I skipped Roel. I got 6 beers out in stead of 7. Harsh. Painful!? Only needed once. Roel got the message and never ducked his round again. And I learned a lesson.

Human interaction is about balance. About giving and getting. And giving first! Not giving=not drinking ☺!

I have lost track of Roel long ago. But not of all of my co-students. Some of them I still see today, some 20 years later. We form a small network. Although working in completely differently situations, we share something: memories of our college time. The bonds that we made then still exist. Occasionally we have another beer. Giving and getting. Now and then we inform each other, about a website, an article, and an opportunity for one of us. Hey, after not seeing Jan for 15 years I helped him land a job. He later on helped me in my study of the laws of human networks.

And the basic secret of it, the principle of the human interaction mode. What is that?

There are 5 modes of human interaction:

- 1: Steal
- 2: Beg
- 3: Deal
- 4: Like
- 5: Love

Obviously Roel was begging.

Balance can only exist in Deal, Like and Love. Therefore lasting connections, repeated interactions over time, networks of people only can occur when based on deals, liking each other or loving each other.

It's that easy! All this fuzz about networking all boils down to dealing, liking or loving. So now you think: that's nice, but here I am, working my b... of and how on earth is liking or loving going to help me find my job? How indeed?

The good news is: it can be done. You can do it! Whether you are an expert-networker or supernerd. Networking is not a mystery. There are laws in networking. Laws that govern the way networking works, laws that are irrespective of the people.

Here are the 7 laws:

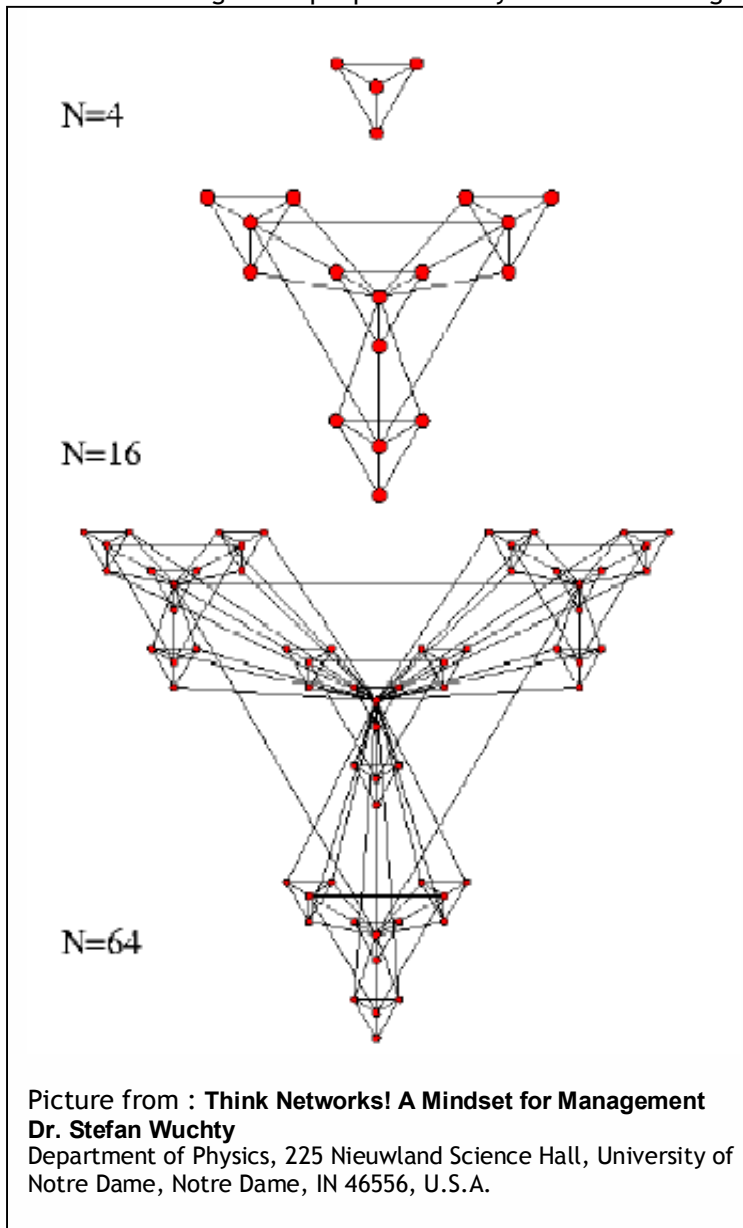
1. The law of the small world
2. The law of the first mover advantage
3. The law of the fit getting rich
4. The law of the strength of weak ties
5. The law of the risk of referencing
6. The law of the crisp question
7. The law of the paradox of profit

1. The law of the small world

There are only 6 degrees of separation between you and anybody else. That means that within 6 steps you can connect to anyone else on this planet. If you don't believe me, check the studies that have done in this field. (look for keyword as "Scale-free Network" and "small world" or read the book of Barabasi<sup>ii</sup>)

The reason: networks consist of clusters<sup>iii</sup>, connectors and hubs.

We still are talking about people here. If you look at the figure, you will see what I mean.



Our group of students is a cluster. We share a common interest. We are connected and interacting. Jan as a matter of fact is our connector. He was the one that we all connected to. He often but not always took the initiative for the funstuff that we did. Including beers. If you would kind the number of connections that any given person has with the others, Jan would have the most.

Still he was not a hub. A hub is a superconnector. Hubs are people with an extraordinary number of connections. Hubs are people that really like people. And know many many people.

So how does the small world affect you?

The answer is simple: you are who you know. So to speak. Answers this: what 'clusters' are you in? What clusters do you want to be in? Which of your friends of acquaintances is a connector? Who the hub, who knows the hub? The secretary of the professor could be a connector. The long lasting chairman of the alumni could be the

hub. The entrance to clusters that you want to be in.

If only you could. But you can. (remember the 5 modes of human interaction I mentioned before!) You can leverage. . . .

## 2. The law of the first mover advantage

Start early. As soon as you can. Why? Networks show preferential preference. That is, network-nodes are not equal. Network-nodes with a lot of contacts tend to get more. Hey, it is this simple. If you have 1 friend and I have got 10 friends, then I get 10 invitations for 10 birthday parties against that pity 1 invitation that you are going to get. So guess what happens to the number of friend that you will have and that I will have after one year. Even if all else is equal, I will outnumber you. First mover advantage.

For you to benefit from the first mover advantage, all you have to do is travel back in time and make lots of friends, and nurture the relationships with them. Or else consider this

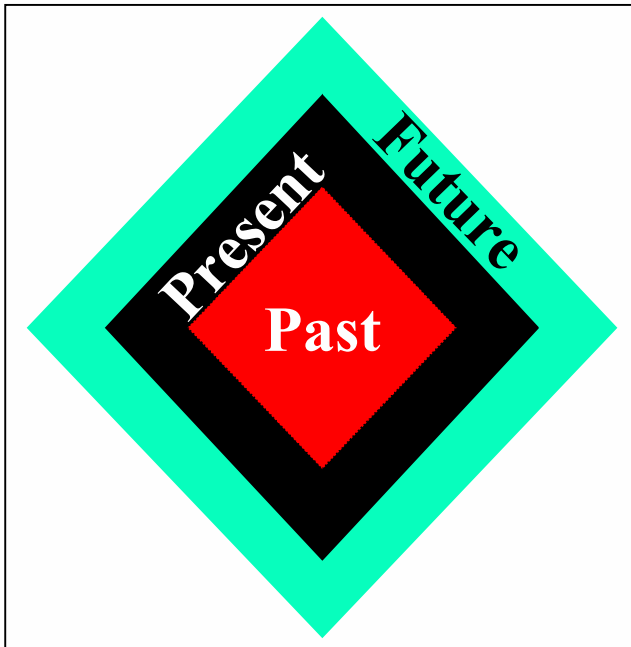


figure. In networking time is not a straight line. The future grows your past through the presence. Your network builds in time.

Always.

In laymen terms: start now and keep moving. Or: Just do it. It simply takes time. Starting now is better than starting tomorrow. So pick up your old addressbook and start sending those Christmas cards. (Remember the 5 modes of human interaction!)

This brings to a sorrow law, the law that might or might not help you (but if you are reading this article because you have to, it probably will not)

## 3. The law of the fit getting rich

Fit do get rich. People who have a deep and earnest interest in other

people, who care, who are humorous, relaxed, friendly, will get more connections as a network-node than your typical hardstudying not communication brilliant nerd. (long live chat for those of us that fit this description).

So if you are fit in making connections, you may even overcome the first mover advantage. And if you are not fit, you might want to get fit. (remember the 5 modes of human interaction). Lets suppose that there are some people that you like. Or love. Or at least can make an honest exchange, a deal. SPEND TIME WITH THEM. Give out beers or the equivalent that is suited for you. Check the balance and here you are: Fit getting fitter! Because here comes the really good news. Work is not found amongst those very very close dear friends. No sir, because with finding work we have:

## 4. The law of the strength of weak ties

In 1973 Mark Granovetter<sup>iv</sup> found in his study of 300 “professional, technical or managerial workers” that 56% of people got their job through personal contacts. 83,3 % of these personal contacts were a vague friend, an acquaintance, someone they did not know well. This is where the law of the small world comes in: information about jobs is possibly best found with hubs. And you do not have to be a best friend or lover of this hub to get to this information.

Imagine your dream job. There is a hub somewhere who knows about it. And she probably knows who is making the decisions about it too. AND YOU ARE ONLY 6 DEGREES OF SEPARATION AWAY FROM HER. And since the strength of weak ties always works, you don't even have to know for sure where to find her yet. Another weak tie can get you there.

And of course, it is already a biblical wisdom: “ASK AND THOU SHALL BE GIVEN”.

(remember the 5 modes of human interaction)

But hey hey hey ... Be careful out there.

Because there always is:

5. The law of the risk of referencing

My friend Jan works in IT, but also is very politically involved (of course). Now suppose that I ask Jan to introduce me to a specific person in his political party, let's say a Sharon.

If Jan likes Sharon, here is his risk of referencing:

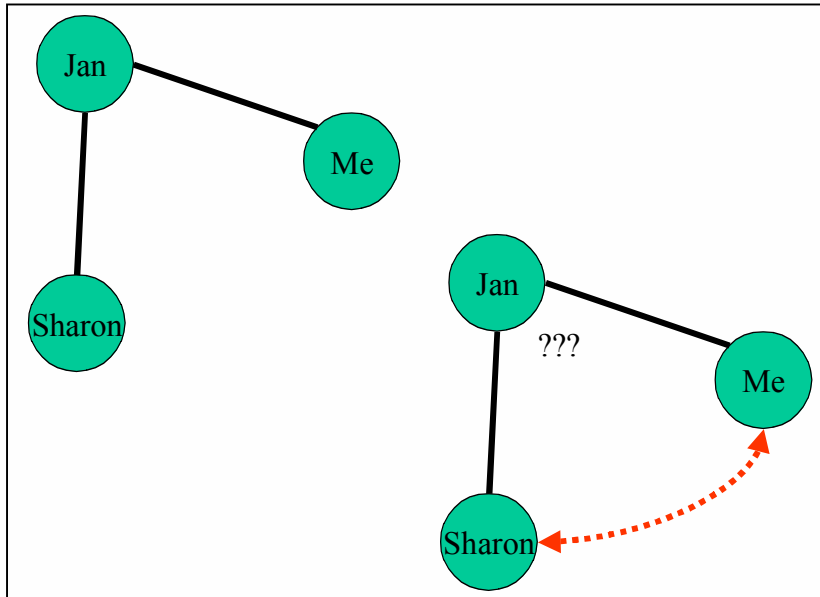
Jan likes me.

Jan likes Sharon.

If Sharon hates me, where does that leave Jan?

In trouble.

See the figure.



Luckily we have the law of the strength of weak ties. Referencing vague acquaintances is less risky than referencing people that you are very fond of.

And for a job we were looking for weak ties anyway. So as long as we are careful, we are in the clear.

Therefore we now can introduce:

6. The law of the crisp question

*"Jan, would you happen to know somebody somewhere, in politics or anything, that would like to give me a job in doing something that you think I'm good at . . . .*

*And I want a company car as well"*

Ever got a question like that? Could you do anything with that? I guess not. In the given example Jan would have to start with thinking of those scarce talents that he knows I have, then conceive a job with that, then think of an area where I could perform such a job and lastly remember some people in this area that are looking for personnel.

Not even my mother could do that, and she knows me very well.

What you need to send out in your network, through the weak ties, reaching for hubs, is:

A crisp question.

For example, a friend of mine, interim manager, always says: "I'm good at cutting companies in half. Do you know any that need cutting?" (*Is that crisp or what?*)

And then, responding on the question in the eye of the listener: "Of course I'm no butcher. I make sure that it is as painless as humanly possible, I make sure that the cut half, the people that are laid off, land on their feet. I start them a new career. But I do cut the company in half."

If you look at this question, notice that it is very short, very rememberable and it almost invariably invokes a need for further explanation.

A beautiful crisp question. Not for me. But I know it works for him.

What is your crisp question? And how does the other one profit? Because crisp questions only work if they obey:

7. The law of the paradox of profit

As a poor student I always gave the first round of beer. I knew that it would all come back to me. And it always did. (I did study too . . . 😊 )  
Networking is simple. There are only 5 modes of human interaction and only 3 of them work for you. Deal, like, give. There are 7 laws that govern networking.  
And you can forget all of that. You can forget all but this: the paradox of profit. You have to give in order to get. Not giving beer, not drinking beer. Treat others as you want to be treated. So steal and be stolen from. Beg and be begged. Give and get. Love and be loved. In networking you simply give without expecting to get back. Give with pleasure. And the world will give back. In networking world, you are more fit of course. And fit get rich, as we have seen.  
Remember balance though. Give respectfully. To the receiver. To yourself. Big gifts are difficult. Giving yourself away is not respectful to yourself. Givers get. That is the paradox of profit.

Roel and I came to a mutual understanding. We found our way of studying, drinking and coexisting. Jan I and see each other regularly. I never stop to be amazed about how easy it is to renew old ties. To make new ones. People are interesting. If you listen to them. If you have the guts to take the first step.  
I wish you all the guts to take that first step, to be interested in people, to deal, like or love.

Dick van Vlooten is founder and owner of di Cuore, an institute that studies the art of doing business from the heart. Networking is one of the major fields of interest. Dick has trained businessman, students and entrepreneurs in the noble art of networking, published articles and given lectures. You can contact him via the website: [www.dicuore.nl](http://www.dicuore.nl)

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