

**Plugging Into The Network**

**By**

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You are not alone. Independent, yes, but not alone. If you're out to prove that you've got "the right stuff" to be a committee chairman, clubhouse manager, General Manager or supervisor; or you're out to make yours the finest country club in the city; or if you're searching for a competitive advantage in these increasingly competitive times, you need to believe in The Network and the power it has to identify, support and inspire you to new levels of achievement. You've got to believe, baby-----

**The Network:**

Some troopers are comfortable with "command and control" leadership---here's what you have to do, here's how to do it, now get out there and get it done---but fewer now than in days gone by. A new paradigm has emerged. Presidents, managers and employees need to buy into The Network.

My experience has shown that good people---whether they be board members or senior management--- bristle when micro managed and flourish when offered "assisted" independence.

The Network has emerged as a growing force in the club business and is based on a few simple principles. The Network can exist anywhere and anytime, formally or informally. Any group of people with related interests or a common enterprise can use to make themselves and their clubs the best they can be as individuals and as clubs. The Network accepts that no one person has all the answers and that getting the right answers has to do with being networked with others on the team.

### **What Does The Network Need to be Successful:**

The Network has a couple of prerequisites. First, it requires people who act independently and aren't afraid to make decisions. Secondly, these people accept the need of mentors for guidance and reflection. Lastly Network People need a collaborative personality that opens them up to substantive conversation with a broad spectrum of talent within and outside of their areas of experience and expertise. In short, The Network is fueled by mentored, collaborative independence.

The Network asks that people “stuff their egos in their back trouser pocket.” Everyone must be willing to share knowledge, insights and experiences. Network People need to get away from thinking about “their turf” and into thinking about “our turf.” Their egos need to handle sharing. Network people stifle the impulse to assume sole credit for success. Network People understand that having “all of our brains” is better than having “my brain alone.”

Network People accept that they need to trade in a bit of their “independence” for a more satisfying form of interdependent independence. Egos need to be channeled. Network People move their thinking from “did I look good” to “did I make the best contribution I could to our collective success.” They forget to whine about “mine, mine, mine.”

### **Nothing Abstract Here:**

Plugging into The Network is real.

I'm making a management change in my service operation. One of the reasons for the demotion of the current service manager has to do with his continuing failure to listen to the mentors around him and to solicit insights from his management peers. He acted independently---a good---but he did so without discussing the issues involved either before he acted or after he'd finished. He was a “lone ranger” but too “lone” in my opinion to be effective. He never got plugged into The Network. He forgot that his individual and our collective success was based on interdependent independence.

So I've elevated his two lieutenants who are hungry for the job, angry that they've been left out of the collaborative loop. I'm in the process of giving them a management philosophy they can live with for the next fifty years. They need the confidence and the enthusiasm to act independently---to get the job done every day while in the trenches---but they need to accept that others know more than they do, that mentors---people who have been there, done that and can articulate how it was done--- are needed and that their peers have ideas worth listening to. They need to develop a collaborative network with other supervisors, their lieutenants, their team, the members and the committee chairs with whom ideas can be floated, opinions gathered and principles addressed in ways directly and indirectly related to the execution of their jobs. Their success or failure will be based on their endorsement of The Network and their belief in mentored collaborative independence as a way to achieve their goals and to contribute to the club's success. No

handholding here but plenty of guidance, support and open communications at all levels and across all functions.

**How Does All This Work in The Real World:**

There's nothing mysterious about plugging in with The Network.

Find talent that loves to act independently, people who enjoy making decisions, acting on those decisions and are “big boys and girls” when it comes to defending those decisions. Find people who take ownership of a project, want to do it their way but are open to input and suggestion; people who enjoy risk yet aren't afraid to fall on their face every now and again.

Give these characters your “vision of the good” with an orientation. Let them know that you believe in independence, that they will learn and grow by using a designated mentor and that they will become more broad based in their thinking by acting collaboratively with their peers, their superiors and their subordinates.

Find them some mentors, people who've “been there, done that” and are willing to talk about it. Broaden your search beyond the obvious. Past Presidents should be kept “in the loop,” prior chairmen can offer guidance, General Managers can assist Assistant Managers, Assistants can mentor supervisors and retired club managers can counsel the current G.M.

Create a model where collaboration is frequent, broad based and open. Eliminate middle men who might mute or soften the exchange of ideas and reflections. Get rid of the gatekeepers who interrupt the flow of ideas. Board members should collaborate with staff in an unfiltered, unfettered and impromptu fashion---no need for the manager to be present, agendas to be made or notes to be taken. Staff should be encouraged to collaborate with club members, committee chairs, supervisors outside their departments and professionals throughout the industry. Upbrief before events begin (I use an Annotated Board Agenda to Upbrief the entire Board before the monthly meeting). Debrief when “it's over,” regardless of whether “it's” an event, a conversation with the bridge players or a dues increase. My weekly Board and Senior Management Update (written each Sunday morning and eagerly awaited by those wanting a dose of the club adventure served up with their morning coffee) provides extensive debrief and upbrief opportunities.

Scheduled weekly and monthly meetings provide assured collaborative opportunities. Presidents should meet with the manager weekly, senior staff should gather for their senior staff meeting weekly, your “internal university” should have a weekly session on topics of pressing interest to the employee team and your committees should meet monthly with the General Manager, their Assistants and the supervisors critical to that committee's success in attendance.

But these things are details. Tactics will vary from operation to operation but the principles of The Network remain the same---mentored collaborative independence.

**Plug In for the Payoff:**

Buying into The Network is the first step. You need to believe. The rest---building the bits and pieces that are needed to make The Network work---will be unique to your club's president, general manager, clubhouse manager or department supervisors.

The Network is the safety net beneath your team. It's the high octane fuel for their engine. It's the warm embrace during times of trouble. It's a philosophy for creativity, execution and growth. Plugging in helps the team operate effectively when "the big cheese" is gone, allows people a chance to test ideas before acting and it binds the management, board and committees together in an interlocking marketplace of ideas. It's fun, it's stimulating, it's satisfying and it works.

Plug in-----