Why is this capability important?

It’s hard to overstate the importance of creating and leveraging strong and diverse networks. While it’s common to think of networking as the means to finding the next job, effective leaders understand that networking provides far more than that. They leverage their networks to keep on top of trends, to test innovative ideas, and to find the support and help they need to make an impact.

“Unlike delivery-driven executives who network to do today’s jobs, effective leaders create and use networks to tap new ideas, connect to people in different worlds, and access radically different perspectives.”

HERMINIA IBARRA,
ACT LIKE A LEADER, THINK LIKE A LEADER,
HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

What does it mean?

Successful leaders recognize that leveraging networks is how work gets done. They actively and consciously maintain their networks. Those who make the most out of networking:

• Are intentional in developing networks for different purposes—strategic, developmental, and operational
• Enhance the effectiveness of their networks by cultivating professional connections through social networks and other forums

These leaders treat networks as mutually rewarding relationships, seeking to add value to network members and their overall networking ecosystem. Savvy leaders cultivate relationships not only within their organizations but also beyond their boundaries—with customers, suppliers, strategic partners, and even competitors. They tap into these relationships for help with projects, solving business problems, and planning for the future. And they help others around them build and capitalize on their networks, making them ever more valuable.

“For a midsize S&P 500 firm, a CEO’s rich and varied network can translate into this magnitude of market capitalization.”

Yiwei Fang, Bill Francis, and Iftekhar Hasan, “Research: CEOs with Diverse Networks Create Higher Firm Value,” Harvard Business Review

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OF MARKET CAPITALIZATION

Leverage Networks

SNAPSHOT
Leadership Capabilities

What is the capability?

Most work today is accomplished through networks—webs of mutually beneficial relationships inside and outside an organization. Leaders who excel at leveraging networks are talented collaborators. They know that networks aren’t about gaining political influence or advancing one’s career—they’re about fostering collaboration while serving organizational goals.

“A mountain of research shows that professional networks lead to more job and business opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate, faster advancement, and greater status and authority.”

TIZIANA CASCIARO, FRANCESCA GINO, AND MARYAM KOUCHAKI, “LEARN TO LOVE NETWORKING,” HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

SEE MORE ON ALL NINE “NOW MORE THAN EVER” CAPABILITIES
Read our paper “Leading for Today and Tomorrow: Capabilities for a Changing World” at harvardbusiness.org/leading-today-tomorrow