

IMPROVE HOW YOU LEARN

FROM NETWORKS

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Overview

In this Module you will be taken through the 10 steps to effective learning as they apply to your desire to improve the way you learn from **Networks**. Steps 1 to 3 are designed to increase your **motivation**. The remaining steps are designed to help you **succeed** in achieving your learning goals.

1. Be clear about what it is you want to learn

This step helps you clarify and define exactly what it is you are trying to learn and to what level of competence

2. Be clear about why you want to learn

This step helps you fully understand your reasons and the likely benefits to you of improving how you learn Assertion.

3. Envision the end-point

This step helps you imagine and visualise as concretely as possible having succeeded in achieving your learning goals.

4. Create learning targets

This step helps you formulate your learning goals in a practical way.

5. Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed

This step introduces you to the different approaches to learning that you can adopt (learning styles) and the different kinds of learning involved in learning to improve your learning.

6. Explore Learning Tools, Tactics, and Techniques

This introduces you to 10 Powerful Learning Tools, Tactics and Techniques you can use to improve the way you learn. The exercises will help to *think* and deepen your understanding of the area you want to improve and actually suggests specific tasks you can *do* at your computer and away from it (in your work and life environment), to dramatically improve your capability.

7. Create a Personal Learning Plan

This step introduces you to a structured planning process to help ensure that you are clear about what you want to do and by when. The plan promotes commitment and the monitoring of progress.

8. Get going

This step helps you with the practicalities of starting to carry out your plan.

9. Keep going

This step helps you with the practicalities of keeping going especially in the face of disappointment, frustration, setbacks and pressure from other sources.

10. Celebrate success

This step encourages you to mark not only completion of the plan but key stages along the way. The message is simple. Give yourself the treat you promised yourself!

1 Be clear about what it is you want to learn



Tick the objectives that are most relevant to you

1.	Develop an understanding of what networks are how they work	
2.	Identify the different purposes that can be served by networks.	
3.	Identify different types of network	
4.	Examine how networks can enhance learning.	
5.	Enable you to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of networks which you create or belong to	

6. Help you identify opportunities for improving your learning and development through networks.	
Do you have any other objectives in mind about learning from networks?	

2 Be clear about why you want to improve your learning from networks



Why do you wish to improve in this area?

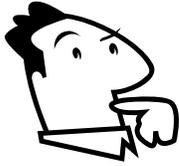
Choose the three reasons most important to you

Increased confidence at work	
Greater self esteem	
Admiration/respect from others	
Overcoming frustration	
Sense of achievement	
Holding back my job performance	
Increase my influence	
Better job	
More money	
Are any other reasons important to you?	



3 Envision the end-point

This is a crucial stage, which is often missed.



Not envisioning the end-point can deprive you of early pleasure of clear progress and it can also undermine weaken your motivation when the going gets tough.

Imagine you have succeeded in your overall aim.

First of all what is the aim?

Think about these questions

- Picture yourself performing at the desired level.
- Where will this be?
- Who will be involved?
- Exactly what would you be doing, what would you be saying
- What will others be doing and saying?
- How will you feel?



If it is enough to merely imagine the end-point, that's fine. If you can right it down then do so.

Where and when?	
Who else is involved?	
What are you doing/saying?	
What are others doing/saying?	
How will you feel?	

One effect of envisioning the end point in as much practical detail as possible is that it helps to energise you, to get going and keep going, and to maintain effort especially in the face of set-backs and difficulties.

Keep a record and keep it where you will see it regularly. Add images and graphics. Personalise it.



Make yourself a Change Shield

Another more concrete way to envision the end-point is to make yourself a shield of change.

If you are that way inclined draw a picture of yourself being strategic. Be creative, have fun with it. Try and capture the changes you want to see in yourself.

Create a Change Shield for yourself or better still with friends or colleagues at work. For guidance see [10 Steps to Improve Your Learning](#)



4 Create learning targets

Learning targets are derived from the overall objectives and create



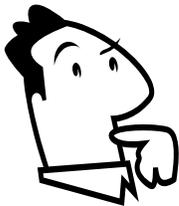
- Greater precision
- A sense of being in control and managing the process
- The ability to monitor your own progress
- The satisfaction of seeing progress
- Knowing when you have arrived

I will know that I have improved from one level to the next because of
Things I know

Things I can say or do
How I will feel
I know I will be making progress if...

5 Understand how you best learn and the types of learning needed

Learning styles



In order to learn well you need to

- Have experiences and plenty of them
- Review and reflect on that experience
- Draw lessons and insights from the experience
- Plan to gain new experiences that result in

improved performance

Most of us have strong preferences for one or more of four styles of learning. From your knowledge of yourself, do you know which your preferred learning styles are?

Activist	This is me Not really sure No idea
Reflector	This is me Not really sure No idea
Pragmatist	This is me Not really sure No idea

Theorist	This is me Not really sure No idea

Different kinds of learning involved

The types of learning involved in improving your learning from networks are

Practical Skills requiring practice and feedback to get right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making contact with people• Negotiating• Influencing others in the network
Feelings and attitudes you need to get right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The give and take necessary to make a network work well• Being curious to learn from others
Understanding of concepts and theory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The nature of networks and how they work• Different kinds of network
Knowledge of facts and things to remember
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowing how to recognise networks• Knowing where to find networks that match your needs• Actual network possibilities• Contact points and what can be expected

It is by understanding that different kinds of learning are involved in improving your learning from networks that appropriate tools tactic and processes can be consciously adopted.

6 Explore learning tactics, tools, and techniques

You should choose according to

- Your preferred learning styles
- Feasibility
- Time available
- Cost implications
- Accessibility

10 things you can do to improve how you learn from networks



1. List your networks

Write a list of all the networks, of any kind, to which you belong formally and informally

Tick the different types of network you think you belong to

Family	
Friends	
Work colleagues	
Clubs	
Schools	
Professional bodies	
Participants in courses	
Religious groups	
Community contacts	
Common interest groups	
Pressure groups	
Hobbies	
Projects	
People you meet on holiday	
Members of societies	
Neighbours	

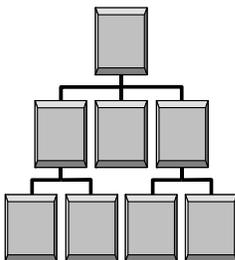
Can you think of any other types on network?

2. Compare and contrast networks with other kinds of organisation such as your employer



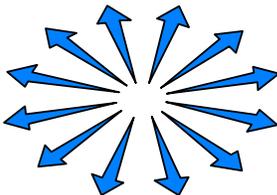
Draw a picture of an organisation and then draw a picture of a network.

What are the differences?



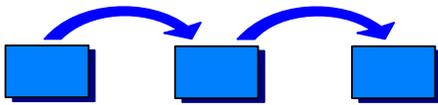
Is this a network? If not, why not?

This is not a network because some parts of the structure do not communicate with each other. In a network all parts can communicate with all other parts.



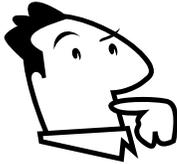
Is this a network? Why not?

This is not a network because all energy and communication flows outwards from the centre. In a network it flows in all directions.



Is this a network? Why not?

This is not a network because energy and communication is in one direction only. This is a chain and not a network.



3. Think about these questions

What are the possible purposes or benefits of networks?

Think about these benefits

Greater freedom
Gain insights into others
Wider range of experiences
Access to specialists
Exposure to different perspectives
Emotional support
Choice
Jump start your learning
Provides focus
Simultaneous knowledge sharing
An efficient way to learn
Increased power, e.g. Lobbying
Access to other networks
Balance between disciplines
Consolation
Others are in the same position
Greater than the sum of its members
Customise international ideas for local use
Internal barriers to communication are lower
Career opportunities/hiring possibilities
Spin-off opportunities/contacts
Cost-effective
Market Research
Confidence to experiment/get started
Shows public commitment
Helps sustain commitment
Facilitates benchmarking

A definition

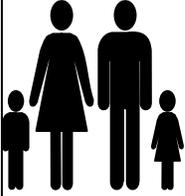
A network is a set of nodes (contact points) connected by relationships of a specified kind. Think of networks as a set of relationships with people from whom you can learn and develop.



Networks can be based on

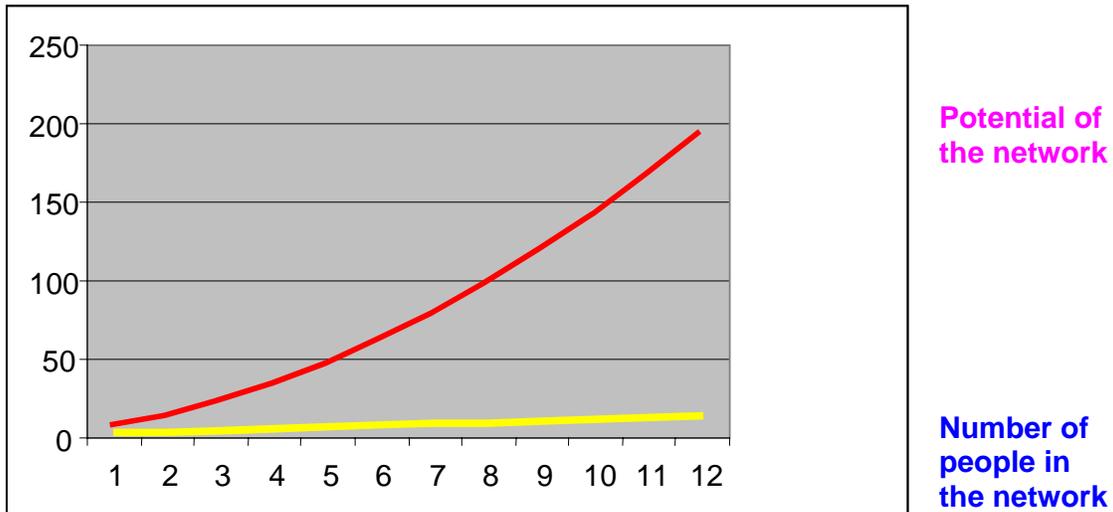
Regions or areas	National associations Community action groups	Think of an example
Local proximity	Neighbours Shared offices The coffee machine	
Common interests	Wine clubs Sports clubs Charities Reading circles	
Common membership	Professional associations Old boy/Old Girl groups Alumni	
Campaigns/lobbying	Political groupings Amnesty International Eco warriors	
Shared know-how/ expertise/technology	Conferences	
Economic/financial	Trade unions Chambers of commerce Trade associations	
Strategic inter- dependence	Protection groups e.g. local bookshops	
Chance	People you meet on holiday, in shops or pubs	

Contact points of a network can be

<p>People</p> 	<p>Name some</p>
<p>Families</p> 	<p>Name some</p>
<p>Groups</p> 	<p>Name some</p>
<p>Companies</p> 	<p>Name some</p>
<p>Computers</p> 	<p>Name some</p>

The potential power of a network is said to be equivalent to the square of the number of nodes or people in it.

Look at the graph below to see how the potential of a network increases dramatically as the number of contacts within it grows.



4. Evaluate the quality of relationships within existing networks.



Networks are mostly informal and depend for their existence on giving value to the users. Otherwise they cease to exist. Relationships within networks can be reviewed under the following headings:

Strength	How much use is made of the contact? Is it used at all?
Directionality	Is the relation ship one-way or two-way? Most of the time or some of the time?
Ease	Is the contact easy? Could it be made easier?
Reciprocity	Is there as much activity in both directions or is it one-sided?
Flexibility/variability	How much scope for change and variety is there in the contacts and the reasons for them? Could I increase the scope?
Control	Does there need to be more control such as agreed levels of contact?



Use this tool to evaluate your networks

Name of NETWORK	Analysis	Action to improve
Number of contact points (nodes) or estimate		
List as many of the nodes as possible or the categories into which they fall		
Evaluation of relationships within the network		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directionality 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reciprocity 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control 		
Overall	Actual benefit to me is	Potential benefit to me

Don't forget, networks can interconnect with other networks.

5. Use networks to learn

Learning through a network has powerful advantages

- More focus on individual needs
- Voluntary
- Not class-room or course-based
- Forces you to formulate your own ideas
- More practical
- Public/social learning
- Self-paced
- Learning through relationships
- Shared values
- More dialogue
- You can structure it
- More interactive
- Negotiated agenda
- Self-paced
- The enthusiasm and pleasures of shared interests

Learning in and through a network is close to the ideal conditions that encourage effective human learning!

6. Use different types of network

There are four very useful kinds of network

1. Learning networks Learning by its members from each other is a key objective.
2. Trust networks Confidential or sensitive information is shared. You seek and give support to each other.
3. Advice networks Members turn to each other for information or advice or help.
4. Results networks Members turn to each other as people on whom they can rely to get things done

7. Map your networks

There are three types of network that you can map

- My trust/support network
- My results network
- My advice network

My trust/support network

These are the people to whom I would turn to seek support or give support

People I am already in contact with	Actual benefits to me	Potential benefits to me
People I could add		

Evaluating the network

- Is the relationship explicit? Has it been openly discussed?
- Is it reciprocal?
- Am I making the best use out of the relationship?
- Could I make the relationship more formal/negotiated?
- Are the different people connected to each other

My results network

These are the people to whom I would turn to in order to get things done

Results Network	Actual benefits	Potential benefits
Names to add		

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Evaluation Checklist

- Is the relationship explicit?
- Is it reciprocal?
- Am I making the best use out of the relationship?
- Could I make the relationship more formal/negotiated?
- Are they connected to each other

My advice network

These are the people to whom I would turn to in order to get things done

Results Network	Actual benefits	Potential benefits
Names to add		

Evaluation Checklist

- Is the relationship explicit?
- Is it reciprocal?
- Am I making the best use out of the relationship?
- Could I make the relationship more formal/negotiated?
- Are they connected to each other?



8. Create your own learning network

These are the people to whom from whom I could learn

People I am already in contact with	How I currently benefit	How I could benefit
Names to add	Potential benefits	

Evaluation Checklist

- Is the relationship explicit?
- Is it reciprocal?
- Am I making the best use out of the relationship?
- Could I make the relationship more formal/negotiated?
- Are they connected to each other?

9. Explore the Internet

The biggest and fastest growing network in history is the Internet. Its potential is vast. Not being able to search and explore the Internet at the beginning of the 21st Century is the equivalent of not being able to read and write at the beginning of the last century.

10. Learn from others

The Internet: It's what I always wanted... to be in touch with a community of ideas like this.... There's something thrilling about the Internet.... It almost doesn't matter what anyone says. It's more the thrill of knowing you're in touch with people laterally, rather than through a filter of some kind.

Brian Eno (b. 1948), British rock musician. 1993.

Your personal learning contract is a statement of commitment to yourself and is also a means to monitoring progress.



The contract can be as detailed and as structured as you see fit (this varies greatly from person to person) but it should at least contain statements of

Why do you want to improve how you learn from Networks?		
Why?		
The level you are starting out at (as precisely as possible)		
The level you wish to achieve (as precisely as possible)		
The specific actions you are going to take including the tools, tactics and techniques you are going to use		
This week		
Next week		
By the end of month one		
Month two		
Month three		
Month six		
Beyond six months		

How you will know you are making progress?

How you will know you have succeeded?

Keep a record and look at it from time to time. If you can involve others in your commitment you will increase your chances of success.

8 Get going



If you have got this far you are already going, but the critical thing is to take action that enables you to feel you are actually improving. There are several ways to do this.

- Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen in a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim.
- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Aim for early success. It reduces the risk of giving up early on.
- Remind yourself of the expected benefits and potential rewards. Look back at your envisioning exercise or your Change Shield.

9 Keep going



Getting going is hard enough, but to keep going is often harder still.

- Refer to your progress indicators and tick them off as you make progress.
- Recognise that guilt and anxiety about progress is inevitable
- Re-adjust goals and timescales to be more realistic in the light of experience.
- List early warning signs that may block you progress and think about responses that would help

Danger signs	Responses
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Meet up with a friend or colleague whom you have not seen for a while and describe or demonstrate what you have done in the interim

Identify your personal reinforcers that will help you to keep going regardless of

- Set-backs
- Disappointments
- Frustrations
- Unexpected problems

What might they be?

- Pressures from other sources

What might they be?

Reinforcers are REWARDS you can give yourself (treats) that you would not otherwise have had but for the progress you have made. They include a meal out, chocolates, an outing, champagne, a weekend away, etc or whatever takes your fancy.

Equally reinforcers can be PUNISHMENT that you inflict on yourself for lack of progress that you had committed to. This can be denial of the promised treats or something stronger like paying out to a charity. On balance rewards work better than punishments.

What support do I need and what can I put in place?

My REINFORCERS are

10 Celebrate success



Finally don't forget to mark the achievement of having moved from one level of performance to another. It is always a satisfying feeling to know that you have done it, but there is also the intrinsic satisfaction of performing at a higher level than previously.

Some forms of learning are acknowledged through accreditation and certificates, but vast amounts of personal learning and growth are not recognised in this way. Much of the most important learning (tolerance and understanding, effective parenting, leadership, teamwork) is not recognised in this way.

Try to find ways of expressing the pleasure of the learning you have achieved.

If I achieve my overall goals my overall REWARD will be

Ultimately, the best way is simply to think and act in new ways and feel the benefit for you and for others, and then commit yourself to further learning.