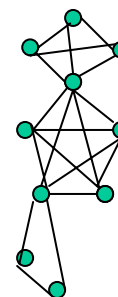


A simple exercise to evaluate the brokers and “holes” in your network can be developed from the idea of Six Degrees of Separation. Six degrees of separation doesn’t simply mean that everyone is linked to everyone else in just six steps. It means that a very small number of people are linked to everyone else in a few steps, and the rest of us are linked to the world *through* those few. Those few are the persons who *broker* your relationships and access to others.



So who are the “brokers” in your network?

There’s an easy way to explore this idea. Suppose that you made a list of 25 people whom you would call your circle of business contacts and then you worked backward from each person until you could identify who was ultimately responsible for setting in motion the series of connections which led to that contact.

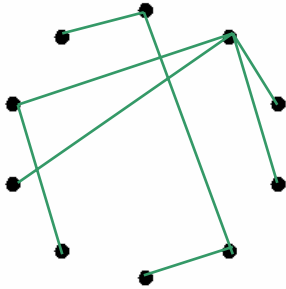
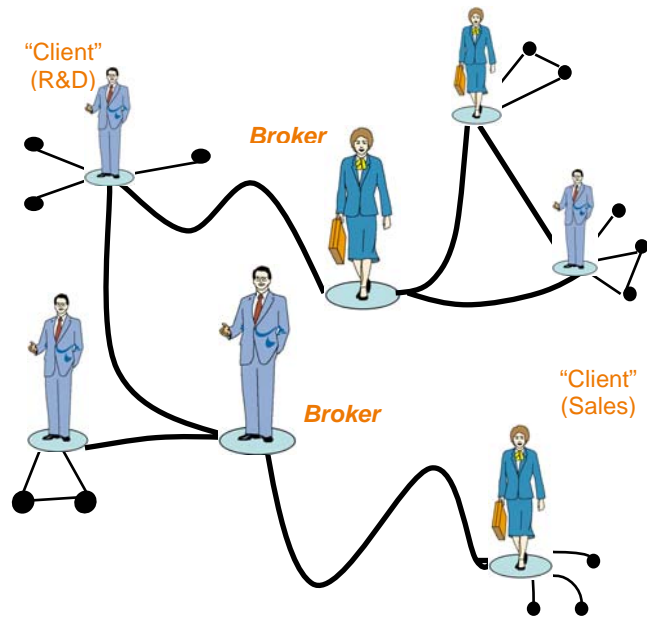
I have created a worksheet (available on request) to help facilitate this analysis. What people in your contact network rely on you for their key contacts? Having this information gives you some insight into asymmetries in your network and the degree to which you are a broker for others.

After completing this exercise, you will likely find distinct patterns of development to your network connections.

Do most of your connections occur through similarity of interests, introductions, physical proximity, or overlapping activities?

- Do you rely disproportionately on your own to make contacts? What makes individuals, following their natural tendencies, likely to form contacts with others who are like them?
- If you select too many contacts with similar ways of viewing the work, are you missing opportunities and putting yourself in client rather than broker positions?
- Research shows that contacts made through others who are dissimilar to you provide novel introductions and information because they are from different social circles while contacts made directly often suffer from the problems of self-similarity principle.

- You may discover that the most important connections are made through overlapping activities rather than interest or introductions rather than physical proximity and so on. Why is that? What kinds of overlapping activities build networks rich in social capital? How and why do activities play this important role?
- Does personality play a role in the types of networks people tend to create?



- What are your patterns of brokerage?
- Some persons find that their circle of business contacts isn't a circle at all but an inverted pyramid built around brokers.
- Who are your brokers? ; How do you nurture the relationship? Do you tell them they are brokers in your network? What are the risks?