

8 people you need for a killer professional network

You probably know by now that networking is important and developing a strong professional network should be a priority if you want to have a career you love. But it's equally important to have a network that's diverse, to help you become a well-rounded individual and progress your career.

Specifically, there are eight types of people you should have in your network to help you navigate your way to your dream job, whether that's an executive or an electrician.

1. **The Leader.** This is someone who knows how to bring people along with them on their vision. Career coach Nicole Grainger-Marsh says, "Having a leader in your network is a great way to hone your own leadership style, as when it comes to this softer skill, we learn by watching." Leaders are also likely to be well connected due to their high standing in their industry, so will often have valuable contacts and opportunities they can pass on.
2. **The Mentor.** Whether they're working in the role you want to be in or they've excelled in an area where you want to develop skills, a Mentor is someone you should be able to learn from. "If you're looking to take on a new challenge, learning from someone who has already done it can only strengthen your profile," says Grainger-Marsh.
3. **The Coach.** This person helps you identify your goals, and then they support you and challenge you as you go about realising them. "Knowing where you're going and what you're aiming for is more than half the battle, and sometimes it's hard to get that clarity just with your own thinking. Having a coach in your corner gives you clarity and support and, ultimately, your coach becomes your personal value-amplifier."
4. **The People-Person.** With emotional intelligence off the charts, these people are great at dealing with others and always know what to say. "Having tough conversations can be very confronting, and if you're looking to take that next step, chances are you'll need to have them," says Grainger-Marsh.

5. **The Connector.** These people know everyone, everywhere. Connectors' worlds revolve around relationships, and they love connecting their networks. Grainger-Marsh calls them another type of "personal amplifier" – if they endorse you to a connection who will help you in your current role (or your next one), that referral could mean the difference between being one of many and being the one of many."
6. **The Idealist.** Also known as the dreamer or the out-of-the-box thinker, idealists encourage you to look at things from new angles. Grainger-Marsh says, "If you want to do more and do things differently, you have to think outside the box sometimes – otherwise you're just expecting a different effect from the same actions." Idealists help you mix it up!
7. **The Realist.** On the flip-side of the idealist, realists will challenge you as they help guide your ideas into real life. It's all about balance. "Once you've embraced the idealistic dreamer element, you need to have that element that tempers your dreams with reality. Realists will keep you grounded and help you translate the dreaming into doing – that makes it tangible and beneficial."
8. **The Up-and-Comer.** An important but often forgotten aspect of a great network is ensuring you pay it forward. The ambitious up-and-comer is someone you can do this with by mentoring them. After all, as Grainger-Marsh says, your network represents you. "It can't just be about how it helps you grow. It needs to provide value and show all the sides you offer as a professional. Extending that mentorship adds immense value to others, and to yourself."

Networking is not a one-way street, but pay it forward and you'll reap the rewards of a well-rounded, killer professional network.