



WPO SPARK KIT: Networking

A curated facilitator kit for WPO Chairs and members

HOW TO USE THIS SPARK KIT

This kit offers you an easy way to facilitate a group discussion about **Networking**. To get started, we recommend the following steps:

- Review the recommended reading list in the Spark Resource Summary chart below.
- Click through the links to see complete articles in Spark, OR simply read the **Executive Summaries** (page 4) section for quick reference. If you don't love reading, simply watch the short videos linked below.
- Prepare to facilitate your discussion using the prompting questions & tips suggested on pages 2-3.

TOPIC OUTLINE

Love it or hate it, networking brings opportunity and creates community. Learn ways to leverage your connections for growth, and find meaningful ways to contribute to your network.

SPARK RESOURCE SUMMARY

The chart below contains a carefully curated selection of Spark content to assist you in learning more about the topic and leading your discussion. You are encouraged to read the complete articles. However, for your convenience, we've also provided **Executive Summaries and Key Points starting on page 5** to simplify your preparation.

SPARK RESOURCE TITLE

TIME COMMITMENT

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Mapping a Strategic Network | Video – 3 min watch |
| 2. Easy Networking Tips for the Networking Haters | Video – 3 min watch |
| 3. How to Ask for an Email Introduction | Article – 6 min read |
| 4. How to Maintain Your Professional Network Over the Years | Video – 4 min watch |
| 5. The Awkward Person's Guide to Networking | Article – 5 minutes |
| 6. Remote Networking as a Person of Color | Article – 8 min read |



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PREPARATION FOR SPARK DISCUSSION

WPO Chairs: Share this entire document with your members ahead of your meeting and encourage them to review content.

WPO Members: Feel free to use this kit with your team to generate valuable discussion about the topic. **NOTE:** Your team will not have access to the full articles unless you have a company Spark subscription. But you are welcome to share the article summaries or download PDFs from your own account.

SCOPE FOR: Networking

This Spark kit creates an opportunity for members to share experiences and best practices related to **Networking** for learning, connections, growth and community building.

Your aim as facilitator is to draw out the wisdom in the room and encourage members to learn from both the successes and failures of their peers.

POTENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Why your network is valuable and how to best leverage it, particularly ‘dormant ties’.
- Ways to embrace networking even if you don’t love it.
- Practical techniques to make the most of networking events, and online.
- How your network can benefit others.

SPARK DISCUSSION: 30 – 90 MINUTES

Below are a few options to either lead a discussion or facilitate an “Asks and Offers” practice session. Choose what you think will work well with your group.

Each one of the optional activities below could take between 30 – 60 minutes depending on your group size and engagement levels. You could certainly extend it to 90 minutes as needed.



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Activity Option # 1: Asks and Offers (30 – 60 min)

Many people network to either promote their business or look for specific resources to help grow their business. It's important to have the skills to ask for what you need when you have an opportunity to tap into your network.

This activity will support members to practice asking for help. Each WPO Chapter is a rich pool of resources and generosity, with an opportunity to match challenges with solutions, and asks with offers of support.

Instructions:

1. Give the group about 3 minutes to think of something they want to ask for (it could be business or personal).
 - We suggest using the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realist, and Time bound) to frame the ask.
 - Encourage everyone to write down their ask. Feel free to share a few examples to get them thinking (these are some real ones from Calgary chapters):
 - I'm looking for an introduction to an electrical engineer at _____ company, by the end of the month.
 - Does anyone know of a dog training company for an aggressive animal, ideally this week?
 - I'd love suggestions for a vegan yoga retreat in a warm location for next winter.
 - What networking groups can I encourage my staff to join in order to generate leads for our new service offering?
 - Please introduce me to great speakers who are willing to speak for an honorarium fee at our retreat in Nov.
2. Go around the table and have each member share their ask. Spend about 3 – 5 minutes per person clarifying what they are asking, and seeking out offers from the chapter.



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- Strongly encourage EVERYONE to ask for something. This can be difficult for many, but it's great practice for them to be prepared with a request for their next networking opportunity.
- The emphasis in this activity is on asking for help. Of course there will be excellent offers of support for each ask. Each member is responsible to note any offers of support and follow-up as needed.

Debrief:

Ask members to share any learning from this activity with any of these prompting questions:

- What resonated for you?
- What was easy or hard about this activity?
- How does this apply to real life networking with people you might not know and trust as much as your WPO peers?
- How could your staff benefit from practicing asking for something in a networking setting?

Activity Option # 2: Facilitated Discussion (30 – 60 min)

Facilitate a group discussion by asking members to **share an example of their most creative and or successful networking stories**. Or, perhaps share a time when it didn't go well, and what lessons were learned.

Themes to be listening for:

- Best practices and outcomes from networking.
- Why networking is important to you and your organization.
- Any learning from Spark material that members are likely to apply in real life.

Debrief:

If you have a flip chart or white board, feel free to capture the input and look for the trends in terms of which strategies are most popular and successful.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY POINTS FOR SPARK RESOURCES

(NOTED IN CHART ON PAGE 1 — READ THESE SUMMARIES OR FIND THE FULL ARTICLES IN SPARK)

How to Ask for an Email Introduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Email introductions can be valuable for expanding professional networks, but they place a burden on the person facilitating the connection. This is especially true for women, who are often expected to perform more favors and are judged more harshly for delays in email responses. To mitigate these challenges, requesters should craft thoughtful, forwardable emails that include clear introductions, specific motives, evidence of research, and ease of scheduling. Respect the introducer's time while increasing the likelihood of a successful connection. Always express gratitude and provide follow-ups to foster goodwill and encourage future introductions.

KEY POINTS:

1. **Cost of Requests:**
 - a. Email introductions require time and effort from the introducer, which can accumulate significantly with frequent requests.
 - b. This burden is often heavier for women, who face higher expectations to provide favors and quicker email responses.
2. **Forwardable Emails:**
 - a. Writing a forwardable email can ease the introducer's task, showing respect for their time.
 - b. The email should include a brief introduction, a clear motive for the connection, and relevant information about the requester.
3. **Content of Forwardable Emails:**
 - a. **Introduce Yourself Briefly & State Motives:** Provide a concise summary (around three lines) of who you are and relevant information. Clearly



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articulate why you want to connect in about three lines, including any pertinent details.

- b. **Make it Easy:** Offer convenient meeting times and include links to your LinkedIn profile and website. Use a calendar booking software.

4. **Double Opt-In Introduction:**

- a. The forwardable email allows the introducer to verify if the other party is willing to connect, ensuring a double opt-in process.
- b. Include a line in your email for the introducer to easily check the recipient's willingness to connect.

5. **Follow-Up:**

- a. Once the connection is made, send a calendar invite with location / virtual link information, and a brief agenda.
- b. Title the meeting invite clearly with both names to ensure clarity on the calendar. Consider adding a clear purpose statement in the body of the invitation.

6. **Express Gratitude:**

- a. Always thank the introducer and follow up to inform them how the connection went. Gratitude can foster continued support and willingness to help in the future.

7. **Burden on Women:**

- a. Women, particularly women of color, often face a heavier burden in performing these favors, which can impact their career progression.
- b. Thoughtful, forwardable introductions can help distribute this burden more equitably.



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The Awkward Person's Guide to Networking

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Networking is widely recognized for its career benefits and business growth opportunities. However, many people, especially introverts and those who feel socially awkward, find it uncomfortable and often avoid it. Alyssa F. Westring offers strategies to help individuals overcome their aversion to networking by reshaping their perceptions, focusing on what they can offer, embracing curiosity, and playing to their strengths. By adopting these approaches, even those who feel awkward in social interactions can develop and maintain valuable professional relationships.

KEY POINTS

1. Importance of Networking:

- a. Networking is crucial for career advancement and business growth, providing benefits like higher revenue and job satisfaction.
- b. Despite its importance, many people avoid networking due to discomfort and social awkwardness.

2. Common Barriers:

- a. Many use busyness as an excuse to avoid networking, but the real issue often lies in the discomfort of engaging in transactional behaviors.
- b. Networking can feel inauthentic and unnatural, especially for introverts and those who struggle with social interactions.

3. Rewriting the Networking Narrative:

- a. Challenge the negative stories you tell yourself about networking, such as it being inauthentic or pointless.
- b. Rewrite these narratives to see networking as a valuable and authentic part of career development.



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4. Understanding What You Have to Offer:

- a. Networking often feels awkward because it seems like a one-sided effort to gain something.
- b. Recognize that you have unique perspectives and can offer valuable insights and opportunities for others to share their expertise.

5. Fostering Authentic Curiosity:

- a. Shift focus from worrying about what to say to being genuinely curious about others.
- b. Prepare for networking events by researching and thinking about what you truly want to learn from others, making interactions more natural and engaging.

6. Playing to Your Strengths:

- a. Learn what networking strategies work best for you and embrace your unique quirks.
- b. Don't be afraid to acknowledge your nervousness or mistakes, as vulnerability and humor can make you more relatable.

7. Encouraging Others:

- a. Encourage peers to explore their own networking resistance and find ways to overcome it, as they likely share similar feelings of awkwardness.
- b. Building a supportive environment can help everyone improve their networking skills and benefit from stronger professional relationships.



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Remote Networking as a Person of Color

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The shift to remote work and physical distancing has changed the landscape of professional networking, eliminating traditional in-person events. While some people are relieved by the absence of networking pressures, it remains a crucial activity for career advancement, particularly during challenging economic times. Networking is essential for building social connections, gaining insights, and accessing career opportunities. However, it can be particularly difficult for professionals of color, who face unique challenges in these interactions. This article outlines strategies for professionals of color to leverage networking effectively, by engaging in events, maintaining connections, and participating in community service.

KEY POINTS

1. **Challenges for Professionals of Color:**
 - a. Networking can be particularly challenging for professionals of color due to unique obstacles such as not being perceived as powerful or credible.
 - b. Professionals of color often feel isolated and struggle to navigate racial boundaries in social events, leading to less outreach and relationship-building.
2. **Perceptions and Frequency of Networking:**
 - a. Many professionals of color view networking as uncomfortable or unnecessary, with a significant portion citing busyness or a preference to focus on work as reasons for not engaging in it.
 - b. A study revealed that 82% of professionals of color participated in networking activities less than once per month, a rate insufficient for building high-quality connections.
3. **Benefits of Networking:**
 - a. Networking is critical for marginalized individuals to gain visibility and career opportunities.



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- b. Engaging in networking helps in forming high-quality connections essential for well-being and career advancement.

4. Strategies for Effective Networking:

- a. **Re-activate dormant connections:** Reach out to past contacts through social media or direct messages to rebuild connections and stay informed about opportunities.
- b. **Participate in learning communities:** Engage in virtual seminars and discussion groups to meet new people and share resources.
- c. **Maintain outreach to champions and sponsors:** Keep in regular contact with key supporters who can provide advice and opportunities.
- d. **Network through community service:** Join community outreach events to meet people with common interests and build meaningful relationships.
- e. **Focus on shared networks:** Emphasize collective networks (e.g., alumni associations) to build stronger connections and support others.

5. Supporting Networking Efforts:

- a. It's important for managers and industry leaders to proactively maintain contact with colleagues of color to prevent them from feeling isolated.
- b. Professionals of color should ensure regular interaction with their managers and peers to stay visible and connected.



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How to Access and Use Spark

Q: How do I log in to access HMM Spark?

A: The HMM Spark login page can be accessed online [HERE](#). You can also access it from the WPO Homepage: www.women-presidents.com > Login (top right) > Login under Spark.

Q: What is my username and password?

A: Your username will be the email you have on file with the WPO. You will be prompted to create your own password prior to logging in for the first time.

- a. Please select the “Forgot Password” link under the HMM Spark portal login.
- b. Enter your email, and the system will prompt you to create a password.
- c. Once you have created a password, you may log in using your email address and newly created password.

Q: I am being prompted with "What skills would you like to develop?" Are my skill selections permanent?

A: After the initial account setup, you **must** select at least one skill in order to receive personalized learning pathways and full access to the HMM Spark portal. Please note that the skill selections can be updated at any time by going to **Your Profile > Skills**.

Q: I forgot my password. What are the steps to reset my password?

A: To reset your password, please select the “Forgot Password” link under the HMM Spark portal login.

Q: Am I able to adjust the frequency at which I receive emails from HMM Spark?

A: Yes! Each member is automatically set up to receive a daily digest email with information that is relevant to their interests (based on their initial selections). Members can adjust the frequency of the digest emails at any time by going to **Profile Settings > Communications**.

If you are still having issues, be sure to reach out to Tomi Jane.