

SUMMARY NOTES

# How to use your hidden network to uncover new career opportunities



CAREER CHANGE ONLINE MASTERCLASS

Making A Shift Series

Careershifters

## **This Masterclass was a conversation with David Burkus.**

David is a keynote speaker, business thought leader, organisational psychologist and bestselling author of *Friend of a Friend: Understanding the Hidden Networks That Can Transform Your Life and Your Career*.

### **What is your hidden network?**

We often think networking means we have to be fake, or super-extroverted and go to cocktail parties or Zoom meetups to meet people we'd like to network with.

Instead, think of networking as understanding the network that is already around you (your hidden network) and ensure you act accordingly. Focus on using dormant and weak ties:

- A 'dormant tie' is someone you know but you haven't talked to in a long time – e.g. a former colleague or friend from an old hobby you used to do.
- 'Weak ties' are people you know, but not that well – e.g. someone you'd see occasionally at the tea station in your workplace.

Remember in career change other people are your most valuable tool in making a shift.

## Key Learning Points

1. Use weak and dormant ties to reconnect with people who could help you with your shift
2. Be open to the range of connections you could make
3. Discover where the in-person conversations have moved to, so you can join them
4. Manage connecting with weak and dormant ties to avoid becoming overwhelmed
5. Use your hidden network to help you move forward in career change situations

## Use weak and dormant ties to reconnect with people who could help you with your shift

- Seek out 'dormant' and 'weak' ties (your hidden network), instead of connecting with strangers. Remember these ties are powerful as they'll have access to new information and careers you've never heard of. In particular, they could give you new introductions to help you expand your view of the world.
- Make your first reconnecting message short and simple e.g. "Hey, I was thinking about you today, and I hope you're well. No reply needed". Find something that you've genuinely come across that reminds you of them – e.g. "Hey, I saw in the paper that your favourite sports team won at the weekend and it made me think of you. How are you doing?" Remember that "No reply needed" is the signal that you're not trying to get anything out of it, that you're just trying to reignite a connection. It's a really powerful way to connect and you never know where the conversation will go after that.
- Remember to not be transactional in your message. Don't say "Hey Jennifer, We haven't talked in three years and now I want something?" Instead say "Hey, It's been a long time and this is what's going on in my life right now."

## Be open to the range of connections you could make

- Tell people you're looking to make a career change and want to find out more about the sector. Explain that you don't know anyone in the area and ask them, "Who do you know in <blank>?". By asking this kind of question, you could end up with a list of people to speak to, rather than just one.
- Don't stalk a LinkedIn second degree connection to introduce you to a specific person or company. Remember, the person you're asking an introduction from might not know the connection well or feel comfortable making an introduction.

## Discover where the in-person conversations have moved to, so you can join them

- Find out where people working in areas you're interested in are now gathering, including where previous face-to-face conferences or events have relocated to. Discover if people are now having conversations in a dedicated online forum, a group on LinkedIn or Facebook, or a specific hashtag on Twitter. Join in the conversations: they could help you discover more about the area you're moving into and furnish you with new contacts.

## Manage connecting with weak and dormant ties to avoid becoming overwhelmed

- Make connecting a habit: reach out to weak and dormant ties on a regular basis – e.g. five per week. Building regular connecting into your life will make it easier when you need to write the “I need help” email or they need to ask you for help.
- Pace conversations over time if you're more introverted, to help you feel less drained. Don't schedule four or five reconnecting conversations back to back in one afternoon. Instead, spread them out over a week so you have time to recharge. Remember, it's OK to put a pause on reaching out to new people if it starts to get overwhelming. Focus instead on letting conversations with people you're currently in touch with play out.
- Create a system to keep track of who you're in contact with, that reminds you if you've not been in touch – e.g. in your existing calendar or software such as [Connection Fox](#) and [Levitate.ai](#). Record and use the contact's preferred form of communication – e.g. direct messages or email. If you do, you'll be more likely to stay in contact with them without your messages getting lost or unread.
- Send one follow up about a week later, if you don't hear back from the contact. Move on if you don't get a response, rather than contacting them through multiple mediums. Don't forget, one or two connections will fall by the wayside; focus instead on the responsive contacts.

## Use your hidden network to help you move forward in career change situations

- Start with a hunch. You likely have some ideas that appeal to you more than others, or particular things you enjoy or are good at. Ask if people have connections in multiple areas / sectors, and play the learner card. Say “I’m thinking of leaving this industry. I don’t know exactly what I want to do, so I’m just trying to talk to a variety of people to explore some ideas.” That will trigger ideas in their mind, and could lead to potential introductions.
- Don’t ask for help right away – e.g. “Hey Jennifer, We haven’t talked in three years and now I want something.” Instead, share your situation or where you’re at – e.g. “Hey, It’s been a long time and this is what’s going on in my life right now.” You can do this in the initial message, if you feel comfortable, or wait until your next conversation to mention it.
- Let people make up their own minds about how they’d like to help. Mention what’s going on for you: “I was made redundant because of the pandemic and I’m looking to make a career change, maybe into X industry.” Let them respond how they want to. Be open to them *not* offering help. Remember you’ve still reconnected with someone, and you have more people to reconnect with on your list.
- Find a commonality. Depending on how open or public the person is, it’s not hard to learn about their other interests or hobbies. Use that as a way to approach them and use the learner card – e.g. “I’m looking to learn about X. Could I talk to you for 15 minutes?” Remember, don’t be offended if they don’t reply. Move on to the next person.

## Over to you

### What's one action you can take in the coming week to deepen or expand your network?

- Reconnect with five former 'colleagues' (these can be old friends, people you know through old hobbies or social groups, etc). It needs to have been at least nine months to a year since you last spoke to them.
- Ask at least one of these people during your catch-up conversation: "Who do you know in X (industry / city / company)?"
- Find one online conversation in an industry that you're either curious to find out more about, or that you think you'd like to work in. You can use the 'learner card' and say "I'm looking to learn more about this industry", but you can also use that "Who do you know in X?" question.

## Further resources

### David's book, social media and recommended resources

- David's [website](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube channel](#)
- David's book: [Friend of a Friend: Understanding the Hidden Networks That Can Transform Your Life and Your Career](#)
- David's [other books](#)

### Some of David's articles online at the Harvard Business Review

- ['Former Colleagues Are More Valuable than You Think'](#)
- ['The Wrong Way to Introduce People Over Email'](#)
- ['8 Questions to Ask Someone Other Than "What Do You Do?"'](#)

### Careershifters Articles

- [How To Network Your Way Into A New Career \(Without Feeling Like A Slimy, Lying Con Artist\)](#)
- [How To Connect With Inspiring People \(Even When You Don't Feel Ready\)](#)



## Case studies

- “Like many other changes in my life, it was down to meeting the right people at the right time.”
- “I’ve got four siblings, and I thought I knew everything about them. But when I asked if they knew anybody I could speak to about interesting work, I ended up with some fantastic contacts I didn’t know they had!”

## Other relevant Masterclasses

- How to sell yourself in your career change, without feeling inauthentic
- How to open new career paths by telling your story

## Additional Careershifters resources for the start of your career change

- Finding fulfilling work starts here
- ‘How To Change Career When You Have No Idea What You’re Doing’
- Why Job-hunting Is EATING Your Mojo (And How To Get It Back)
- How To Finance Your Career Change: The Complete Guide (With Real-life Stories And Honest Numbers)
- See our other online Masterclass subjects

## Get expert insights for your career change with our online Masterclasses

Find out more and see our on-demand library of over 20 Masterclasses on:

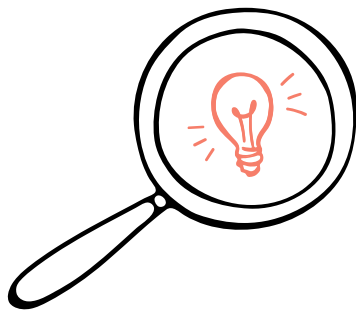
- Figuring out what next
- Building confidence
- Developing skills
- Managing finances
- Making a shift

## Interested in further help for your career change?

### Discover your next best steps with our Career Change Test

Understand which of the five stages of career change you're in, avoid the most important mistakes in each one, and learn the most effective actions to move you forward.

[Find out more](#)



### Kick start your career change with our Online Workshop

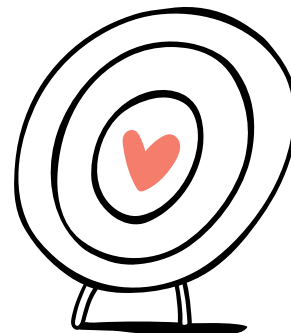
Join a powerful, practical and inspiring workshop designed to help you through those first essential stages of changing career: figuring out what you really want and making a realistic action plan.

[Find out more](#)

### Find direction with our Career Change Launch Pad

Get clarity, accountability and expert help in our 8-week online experience.

[Find out more](#)



“Don’t ask what the world needs.  
Ask what makes you come alive,  
and go do it. Because what the  
world needs is people who have  
come alive.”

— HOWARD THURMAN

**Careershifters**

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