

CASE STUDY

Coaching Through Connection

How the Leader Network Diagnostic Unlocks Career Clarity and Momentum

Overview

The pace of professional change is accelerating. Today's leaders are navigating career shocks, nonlinear transitions, and evolving identities more than ever before. In this environment, traditional development tools fall short. What's needed is a shift—one that brings relationships and networks to the center of career development.

This case explores how the Leader Network Diagnostic (LND) has been used by coaches and development professionals to help individuals at every level—from emerging professionals to executives—gain clarity, build confidence, and create momentum in their careers. Whether in one-on-one coaching, self-reflection, or cohort-based programs, the LND offers a practical, research-backed way to move from uncertainty to action.

This case study is adapted from:

The Social Capital Imperative:
Enhancing Individual and
Organizational Performance through
Network Research and Practice
(Oxford University Press, 2025).

Chapter 8: "Combining
Networks and Coaching
to Spur Professional
Development and
Change," - Donna
Chrobot-Mason and Ali
O'Malley.



A Four Step Framework for Using the LND in Coaching

At the heart of this approach is a four-step process that integrates coaching and network science:



Reconceptualize: Shift the definition of networking from “self-serving schmoozing” to “mutual, meaningful collaboration.”



Diagnose: Use the LND to evaluate the current structure and strength of a network—identifying gaps and opportunities.



Strategize: Based on LND results, explore how to strengthen the network using specific tactics (e.g., building, maintaining, leveraging, transitioning).



Action Plan: Commit to tangible steps and goals to build or reshape the network with accountability and intention.

Diagnosing, adapting, and leveraging one's network can help provide greater clarity and sometimes even offer a much-needed roadmap for career transitions.

Real-World Applications of the LND

Self-Coaching with the LND

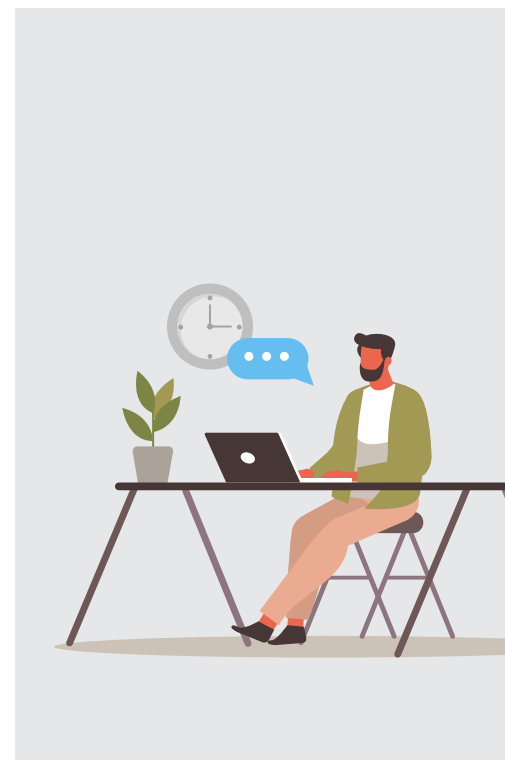
Transitioning to a new career path—especially solo entrepreneurship—can feel overwhelming. For one certified coach, using the LND during a pivot to self-employment revealed the need to reframe her network not just as support, but as potential referral partners and amplifiers of her work.

She described the experience of listing her “Top 15” connections as surprisingly emotional, realizing how many connections had gone dormant through years of transition. The LND helped her:

- Pinpoint relationships to reignite
- Shift from passive presence to active outreach
- Articulate a specific, helpful ask for each connection



Coaching Insight: Self-diagnosis with the LND helped her move from scarcity to abundance mindset—and within 500 days, she had met her revenue goal and achieved greater professional satisfaction than ever before.



Dyadic Coaching: Supporting Career Transitions

In one coaching program, seasoned professionals used the LND to pivot toward purpose-driven roles—nonprofits, new industries, and passion projects. Many came in with limited or highly homogeneous networks. The LND revealed:

- Strong but closed networks (everyone knew each other)
- A lack of connections in target industries
- Hesitancy to ask for help (especially from outside their field)

Using the LND data as a mirror, coaches helped participants recognize underutilized network strategies:

- Building new relationships outside their comfort zone
- Leveraging existing relationships for introductions
- Transitioning away from relationships no longer aligned with their goals



Coaching Insight: One client, a retired banker looking to work in animal welfare, struggled with how to reach out. Through coaching and the LND, he identified adjacent contacts, refined his approach (“20-minute conversations, not job requests”), and set weekly outreach goals.

Real-World Applications of the LND (cont.)

Cohort-Based Coaching with Mid-Career Professionals

In a 10-month women's leadership program, participants used the LND to assess their networks and confront long-held misperceptions. Many associated networking with inauthenticity or "playing the game." The LND and coaching process helped them redefine it as:

- A tool for advocacy, sponsorship, and allyship
- A means of giving and receiving support
- A critical element in achieving future goals—not just current ones

Common themes from LND analysis:

- Heavy emphasis on maintaining relationships, but underuse of leveraging them
- Emotional resistance to "asking for help"
- Network structures that were deep but not diverse



Coaching Insight: Participants committed to expanding their networks across boundaries, identified accountability partners, and practiced initiating high-quality conversations.

Practical Takeaways for L&D Coaching

This case study reminds us that helping leaders navigate professional transitions is as much about relationships as it is about individual skills. Key takeaways for L&D professionals and coaches:

- **Networks are dynamic:** leaders must continuously reflect on and evolve them.
- **Authenticity matters:** leaders benefit most from networking that aligns with their values and style.
- **Peer learning and accountability** (through cohorts or dyadic coaching) strengthen network-based development.
- **Diagnostic tools like the Leader Network Diagnostic** provide valuable visibility into network patterns that influence growth and opportunities.



Ready to talk about leveraging network science in your coaching?

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