

## What is this eNewsletter, and why am I receiving it?

This is the first quarterly Transportation Leadership Institute newsletter which goes out to the current and previous cohorts. It is meant to provide you with information and hands-on tips on relevant topics, update you on upcoming learning and growth opportunities, and introduce two members of the cohorts in each issue. We welcome feedback, input, and suggestions since we want this to be useful and beneficial to all of you!

## Networking -- What is it?

### Did you Know?!

In China, the professional network, called "Guanxi," does not only contain the connections on an individual level but also between companies.

Networking in professional contexts – in contrast to our personal lives – can be considered a "calculating" behavior, therefore a lot of people struggle when intentionally connecting with others. Studies showed that participants literally feel "dirty" after engaging in professional networking (chose a soap bar as reward for participating in the study instead of a chocolate bar).

Nevertheless, studies also report that networking correlates with the ability to achieve goals – the clearer the goals, the stronger the connection between a good network and success.

### What is Networking?

Research defines networking as proactive behavior which is used to build and maintain informal relationships. It can be categorized along different dimensions, e.g., personal or professional, spontaneous or instrumental networking. Networking is mostly conscious; aims at exchanging resources like support, information, access, or opportunities to foster positive career steps. Especially in the light of shorter tenures, temp work, limited contracts, and increased mobility, networks stay with people when moving on. It can be seen as a constant support system that, due to digitization and social media, is easier to maintain now than it has ever been before.



### So what can we do?

Good news! There are several ways you can broaden your network. Even if you belong to the group that mentally reaches for the soap bar once in a while. Here are a few hands-on tips:

**Present yourself:** Have your elevator pitch prepared! This will help you when meeting new people or introducing

**Help others:** There is no easier, faster, or friendlier way than offering your support – independently from whether

yourself to a group of strangers. Make sure you adapt your “pitch” – meet your audience where it’s at! Add a positive ending, something like “I’m looking forward to working with you / learning more” or “It was wonderful to meet you”.

**Become a connector:** A network thrives from having lots of connecting dots; otherwise it wouldn’t be a network. Include others! Bring them along when you think they might be interested, connect people who work on the same topic, highlight experts who might be able to help, or promote those who are willing to do the legwork. Networks need all of that and are “fed” by people expanding and connecting.

**Be yourself:** Being approachable and authentic is crucial. Remember, when you’re approachable, others will talk to you too so it’s not all on you to make the connections! Smiling, looking others in their eyes, greeting others (preferably by name), or being open to a chat in the hallway, will make others feel comfortable around you.

**Listen, listen, listen:** Introducing yourself might be the first step when meeting new people, but don’t forget to listen! You’ll learn more about others, you’ll find out about things you have in common (which always connects people), you’ll hear about topics others work on, what their experiences are, where they’re headed. This is not only valuable information when you have a question in the future or would like to learn a new skill, it also will help you to know whom to contact in specific situations and be a good support system yourself.

you’re an expert in the field or are willing to do the leg work! Since it happens rarely that people will turn down help, this is a pretty successful way of connecting with others.

**Stand out:** It’s important that you stand out when introducing yourself; we are constantly meeting new people and can become overwhelmed. Think about whether you ever did a job that was unusual, an outstanding volunteer task, or hobby; this piece of information will serve as an “anchor” so people are more likely to remember you and your name.

**Put yourself on a schedule:** If you have difficulty meeting new people or really connecting with the ones you know already, set yourself goals: Meet one person per month for lunch, breakfast, or a short meeting. Plan ahead and keep a list of people you’d like to meet or learn more about at some point; putting yourself on a schedule also means reaching out to people which is necessary when trying to build a network.

**Follow up:** Make it a habit to follow up with everyone you meet. That might seem unusual when you’re only meeting the first time, but following up is an investment you make in the relationship and it will be easier to reach out again if you followed up after the first meeting. If there was something specifically that you were interested in, something you kept thinking about, never heard before, want to learn more about, gain experience, or read up on it – let them know! When you highlight specific aspects of your interaction, the person you talked to will know that the follow up was not your standard “thank you” note, but you taking the time to reflect on what they said.

## Want to Learn More?

You can look online! Here are a few articles you can read up on:

- [The 7 Characteristics of a Great Networker](#)
- [16 Tips for Becoming a Master Networker](#)
- [How to Network, for Those Who Hate to Network](#)
- [Confidence is Essential When you Really Don't Know What You Are Doing](#)
- [How This Networking Expert Creates Genuine, Powerful Relationships in the Digital World](#)

In this section we are introducing a member of each cohort. Thank you, Sara and Jon, for being our guinea pigs!



## We asked them the following questions:

1. What do you think about networking?
2. Any tips you'd like to share on how you connect with others?
3. What part of your job do you like the most?
4. If you had three additional hours each week, what would you do?
5. Share a memorable fun fact!

### Sara Williams, VTrans Technical Branch Manager

1. Networking is such a powerful way to learn new things and share valuable information, all while creating positive working relationships.
2. It's not all about work; have a conversation with a coworker or someone from your cohort and find some common ground. You never know what you might find out over a casual conversation or lunch!
3. Every day is different and I'm able to meet, work with, and learn from people throughout all aspects of the Agency.
4. If I had more time in a day, I would spend more time with my kids. Our lives are so busy with work, school, and daycare. Sometimes it feels like I only see them in passing. Life is too short for that!
5. I traveled to Louisiana to play in the U-11 AAU National Basketball Tournament in 1998 after my team won the state tournament.

### Jonathan Griffin, Project Manager, Structures Section

1. Networking is important, it makes you aware of other people's work and helps you form relationships.
2. Be open and candid and ensure that others can relate to you; personally and not only professionally.
3. One of the best parts of my job is definitely working with others.
4. If I had more time in a day, I would do more of what I'm doing already, and maybe use it for tasks that aren't getting done, like paperwork.
5. I wore a sweater vest to a public meeting once in order to win a bet.

## Additional Development Opportunities

### The *Outstanding Organization*

Generate business results by eliminating chaos and building the foundation for everyday excellence. After

"A powerful model of what makes a high performance organization."  
—JEFFREY LIKER, bestselling author of *THE TOYOTA WAY*



# The **OUTSTANDING** Organization

Generate Business Results by  
Eliminating Chaos and Building the  
Foundation for Everyday Excellence

**KAREN MARTIN**

two decades in the trenches of helping companies design and build better, more efficient operations, Karen Martin has pinpointed why performance improvement programs usually fail.

Participate and transfer learning into your daily work. How can you impact your team and influence change?

**Join us for this facilitated book discussion.**  
**Space is limited, register TODAY!**

## AOT Lunch & Learn Series

Stay tuned for upcoming Lunch & Learns throughout 2019 in-person and through Skype.

### Work Zone Safety

March 26 | 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
AOT Davis 5th Floor Board Room

**Be on the lookout for a Skype link!**

### Continuous Improvement 101

April 12 | 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm  
Dill Building Conference Room

**Join via Skype**

## Mentoring

Become a mentor! During your year at the Transportation Leadership Institute as an emerging leader, you learned a lot about yourself, the organization, and networks. Pay it forward and consider becoming a mentor; invest in others in our workforce! You are the perfect mentor to support others stretch and grow!



**Please click here and fill out the mentor application so we can reach out when mentees approach us.**

## DHR Wants to Hear from You!

If you haven't already, please participate in this year's Vermont State Employee Engagement Survey, which will be **closing on Friday, February 15**. To ensure your privacy, all responses remain anonymous and email addresses will not be tracked.

The results of last year's survey are available on the [Employee Engagement Survey](#) page of the DHR website. Please contact [DHR.Survey@vermont.gov](mailto:DHR.Survey@vermont.gov) with any questions.



Complete the survey!