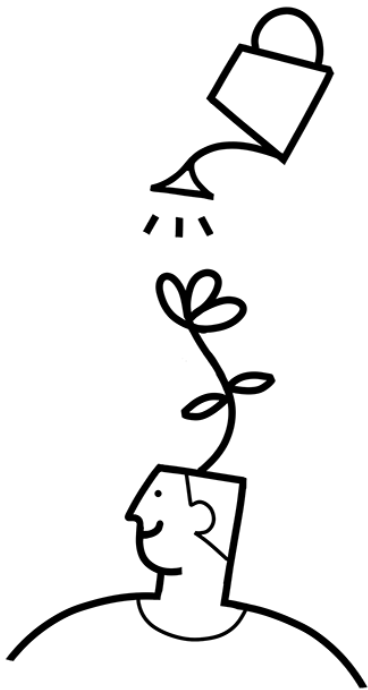


Building Your Personal Advisory Network.

How to build intentional connections that move your career and leadership forward



The Power of Your Personal Advisory Network

Success in your career, whether you're an aspiring leader, a seasoned professional, or someone ready to pivot, rarely happens in isolation. Behind every significant milestone lies a network of trusted advisors, mentors, and advocates who provide guidance, insight, and support.

A Personal Advisory Network is your intentional "wisdom network." It is a carefully curated group of individuals who challenge your thinking, help you navigate challenges, and encourage your growth. Think of it as a collaborative team offering fresh perspectives, accountability, and opportunities you might not uncover alone.

Consider this: many of today's most successful leaders credit their career growth to the strength of their network. Networking isn't just helpful—it's often the deciding factor. In fact, recent UK data shows that **39% of people found their job through their network**, and a large share of opportunities are never even advertised.

Beyond career growth, personal advisory networks are powerful tools for business development, opening doors to new clients, partnerships, and ideas that may otherwise remain hidden.

Whether navigating a career transition or striving to reach the next level of leadership, your network is often the catalyst for transformation. This guide will show you how to build, nurture, and leverage your Personal Advisory Network to achieve your goals.

Why a Personal Advisory Network Matters

The journey to success is not always a straight line. Careers evolve, industries shift, and our motivations change over time. A Personal Advisory Network provides stability and clarity in the face of these transitions. This network of trusted mentors, sponsors, and advocates helps you:



Gain Perspective: Diverse viewpoints helps you uncover blind spots and make better decisions.



Stay Accountable: Advisors keep you on track with your goals and commitments.



Expand Opportunities: They connect you to networks, advocate for you, and open doors you didn't know existed.



Challenge and Inspire You: Their insights push you to aim higher and think bigger.

As Oprah Winfrey said, ***"Surround yourself with only people who are going to lift you higher."*** Your Personal Advisory Network is your strategic asset for career growth.

Case Study: Sarah's Journey

Take Sarah, a mid-level manager who aspired to step into a leadership role. With the support of her Personal Advisory Network, she made it happen:

- Her **mentor** offered guidance on navigating office politics and developing leadership skills.
- Her **coach** helped her identify strengths, address blind spots, and set clear goals.
- Her **sponsor** advocated for her promotion by showcasing her achievements to senior management.

Through this intentional support system, Sarah successfully transitioned into leadership, proving the power of a well-curated network.

No matter your career stage, a well-curated Personal Advisory Network is a strategic asset that ensures you're not navigating your journey alone.

Who Is This Guide For?

Anyone looking to take their career to the next level, including:



Aspiring Leaders: A strong network offers mentorship and insights for navigating your first leadership role.



Established Leaders: Trusted advisors help seasoned professionals grow, adapt, and refine their leadership.



Career Pivoters: A strong network eases transitions into new industries or career paths.

What Is a Personal Advisory Network?

A Personal Advisory Network isn't a formal boardroom of executives, it's a curated circle of people you intentionally bring into your life for support and guidance. It typically consists of:



5 to 8 trusted individuals who have your best interests at heart.



People with diverse perspectives from different industries, career stages, or areas of expertise.



Advisors who provide **personalised insights** to help you advance professionally and personally.

"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."
– Jim Rohn

Each person in your network serves a unique role, from mentors and sponsors to peers and role models. Together, they create a system of support tailored to your growth.

A Lifelong Investment

Building your Personal Advisory Network is not a one-time task, it's a dynamic, evolving process. As your career progresses and your goals shift, so will the people you rely on for advice and inspiration. You're setting yourself up for long-term success and fulfillment by intentionally building and nurturing this network.

In the following sections, you'll learn how to identify the right people for your network, build meaningful relationships, and leverage this trusted group to achieve clarity, confidence, and growth. Whether starting out, stepping into a new leadership role, or pursuing an entirely new path, your Personal Advisory Network will be your foundation for success.

Why a Personal Advisory Network is Crucial for Career Growth

Your Personal Advisory Network is more than a support system, it's a strategic tool for growth and success. Here's why investing time and effort into cultivating this network is crucial:

1. Gain Diverse Perspectives

We all have blind spots. A diverse network helps you see situations from multiple angles, enabling better decision-making.

- **Example:** A peer in another industry may offer an innovative solution you hadn't considered.

2. Stay Accountable

Your network keeps you on track by holding you accountable for your commitments.

- **Example:** A mentor may regularly check in on your progress toward achieving your goals.

"Accountability breeds response-ability." – Stephen Covey

3. Expand Your Opportunities

Networking isn't just about who you know; it's about who they know. Your advisors can introduce you to new opportunities and connections.

- **Example:** A sponsor might recommend you for a high-visibility project or leadership role.

4. Receive Honest Feedback

Constructive criticism from trusted advisors can help you grow and avoid potential pitfalls.

- **Example:** A coach might challenge your assumptions or help refine your approach.

5. Be Inspired to Aim Higher

Your network's success and encouragement can motivate you to push past limitations and think bigger.

- **Example:** A role model's achievements might inspire you to take bold steps in your career.

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." – Norman Vincent Peale

The Ripple Effect of a Strong Network

When you invest in building and nurturing a Personal Advisory Network, you don't just benefit yourself—you create a ripple effect. As you grow, you're better equipped to lift others, contribute to your organisation, and make a lasting impact on those around you. As the saying goes, *"A rising tide lifts all boats."*

In the next section, we'll explore how to identify the right people for your network and ensure they align with your goals.

Understanding the Roles of Different Advisors

In a well-rounded Personal Advisory Network, different types of advisors play unique roles that contribute to your growth and success. Each advisor brings specific expertise, perspective, and support, helping you tackle various challenges throughout your career. Embracing diversity in your network ensures that you benefit from a rich array of viewpoints and experiences. Here are the key types of advisors you should consider adding to your network:

1. Mentors: *The Guides*



Mentors are individuals who have experience in areas you wish to develop and offer guidance and wisdom based on their careers. They are typically more experienced professionals who provide insights, advice, and encouragement to help you navigate your path.

Example: A senior leader who helps you refine your leadership skills or offers advice on career progression.

What They Offer: Wisdom from their career, broader life experiences, and an outside perspective.

Actionable Tip: Look for mentors within your organisation or industry who have a track record of success and are willing to share their knowledge.

2. Coaches: *The Catalysts*



Coaches focus on helping you reach specific goals by providing structured support, feedback, and strategies. Unlike mentors, who share their personal experiences, coaches work with you to identify challenges and work toward measurable goals. Coaches don't need direct experience in your field or industry, they bring the skills, tools, and perspectives that help you increase self-awareness, ask insightful questions to reveal hidden potential, and overcome limiting beliefs and obstacles.

Example: A career or leadership coach who helps you define your vision, uncover hidden strengths, and break through barriers preventing your growth.

What They Offer: Structured coaching sessions, insightful questions to unlock your potential, action plans, and accountability to help you move forward with clarity and confidence.

Actionable Tip: Seek out credible coaches with a proven track record of helping clients achieve their goals.

3. Sponsors: *The Advocates*



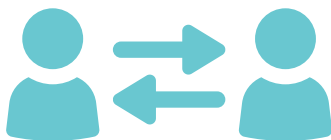
Sponsors are people who actively advocate for your success and opportunities. They go beyond offering advice, they use their influence and network to open doors for you. Unlike mentors who give you advice, sponsors work to create opportunities on your behalf, whether it's recommending you for a promotion or introducing you to influential people.

Example: A sponsor may recommend you for a leadership role or introduce you to key players in your industry.

What They Offer: Opportunities, introductions, and advocacy within their network.

Actionable Tip: Identify potential sponsors by looking for senior leaders who recognise your potential and have the influence to advocate for you. Building a strong record of performance can attract sponsors.

4. Peers: *The Supporters*



Peers are individuals at a similar stage in their careers. They are often your colleagues or people who share similar experiences and challenges. While they may not always have the same level of expertise as other advisors, peers can provide a sense of camaraderie, understanding, and shared experience that can be invaluable in your career journey.

Example: A colleague who shares your career goals and offers advice based on similar challenges or experiences.

What They Offer: Emotional support, shared experiences, and a sounding board for ideas.

Actionable Tip: Engage with peers through professional associations, industry events, or internal company networks. regularly share experiences and support each other's growth.

5. Role Models: *The Inspirers*



Role models are individuals whose careers or achievements you admire and aspire to emulate. While they may not always be directly involved in your network, you can learn from their example by observing how they handle challenges, achieve success, and stay true to their values. Role models can inspire and motivate you as you work toward your goals.

Example: A leader in your industry whose achievements and leadership style you admire.

What They Offer: Inspiration, motivation, and a roadmap of what's possible in your career.

Actionable Tip: Follow role models on social media, read their books or articles, and attend events where they speak. reflect on strategies and apply relevant lessons to your own career.

6. Advisory Boards



As your career progresses, particularly in entrepreneurial or executive roles, consider establishing a more formal Advisory Board. Unlike a Personal Advisory Network, which is more flexible and personal, an advisory board is a structured group of trusted individuals who provide strategic guidance, industry-specific advice, and critical feedback to help you make key decisions and grow your business.

Note: This step is typically more relevant for individuals in leadership or entrepreneurial roles looking to make significant business decisions. It's a powerful option when your network of trusted advisors has grown in influence and scope.

Career Pivot Considerations

When considering a career pivot, whether into a new industry, role, or function, your current network may not fully support your new direction. It's crucial to seek out and build relationships with individuals already established in your target field.

Why It's Important

Your existing network may offer valuable connections for your current role but may lack the expertise or connections necessary for your new career path. Building relationships in your target industry will provide the insights and support needed for a successful pivot.

Action Steps for Career Pivoters

- **Research New Networks:** Identify where professionals in your new field gather. Industry events, online communities, and LinkedIn are great starting points.
- **Expand Beyond Your Comfort Zone:** Connect with new mentors, advisors, and peers with the expertise to guide your transition.
- **Reframe Your Approach:** Be clear about your evolving needs, whether it's knowledge, support, or opportunities, and align your network with your new goals.

How to Build and Maintain Strong Advisory Networks

Building and nurturing strong relationships with your advisors is crucial for maintaining a supportive and effective Personal Advisory Network. Here are some strategies and common pitfalls to be aware of:

1. Be Genuine and Authentic: Engage with people meaningfully. Don't just contact them when you need something. Offer value in return.

- **Tip:** Regularly check in with your advisors and share insights, not just requests.

2. Be Open to Feedback: The most valuable advisors offer constructive feedback. Be willing to listen to their guidance, even if it's not what you want to hear.

- **Tip:** Ask for specific feedback to ensure you're continuously improving.

- 3. Respect Their Time and Boundaries:** Be mindful of your advisors' time. Be prepared for meetings and clear about what you need. A little respect goes a long way in maintaining strong connections.
- **Tip:** Schedule meetings in advance and stick to the agreed-upon time.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

1. Lack of Clarity about Your needs:

- **Pitfall:** Not being clear about your goals and expectations can lead to misunderstandings and ineffective advice.
- **Solutions:** Clearly communicate your career goals and what you hope to achieve with your advisors. This helps them provide more targeted and useful advice.

2. Failing to Follow Up:

- **Pitfall:** Neglecting to maintain regular contact with your advisors can weaken the relationship and reduce its effectiveness.
- **Solutions:** Regularly check in with advisors, even if it's just a brief update or thank-you note. consistent communication helps keep the relationship strong.

3. Being Too Transactional:

- **Pitfall:** Only contacting your advisors when you need something can make a relationship feel one-sided and transactional.
- **Solutions:** Engage with your advisors on a personal level. Show genuine interest in their lives and careers, and offer help or support when you can.

4. Ignoring Feedback:

- **Pitfall:** Dismissing or ignoring feedback provided by your advisors can hinder your growth and damage the relationship.
- **Solutions:** Be open to constructive criticism and show that you value their input by taking action on their advice.

5. Overloading Advisors with Requests:

- **Pitfall:** Bombarding your advisors with too many requests can overwhelm them and strain the relationship.
- **Solutions:** Prioritize your requests and be mindful of their time. Focus on the most important issues and spread out your requests over time.

By being aware of these common pitfalls and taking proactive steps to avoid them, you can build and nurture strong, lasting relationships with your advisors. This will ensure that your Personal Advisory Network remains a valuable asset throughout your career.

Maintaining a Dynamic Network as Your Career Evolves

As your career grows, so should your network. Here's how to keep it relevant:

1. Regularly Assess Your Needs

Reflect on your evolving career goals and identify areas needing new guidance. What roles do your advisors play, and how can their support evolve with your career?

Tip: Ask yourself, "What new skills or knowledge do I need as I advance, and who can help with this?"

2. Update Your Network

As you transition into new roles, industries, or career stages, your network may need to grow or shift. Seek new mentors who bring expertise in areas you're developing.

Example: As you take on more leadership responsibilities, you may need advisors with senior leadership experience.

3. Stay Engaged and Revisit Connections

Check-in with your network regularly, even if you no longer need immediate advice. Building long-term relationships means keeping the lines of communication open and revisiting connections as your career evolves.

By focusing on these strategies, you can maintain a dynamic and effective network that supports your career growth.

The Ripple Effect: How Your Network Elevates Others

Your Personal Advisory Network is not only about you, it's also about mutual support. Here's how to create a ripple effect:



Help Others in Your Network: The more you give back to your network, the stronger your relationships will be. Introduce people who could benefit from knowing each other, share resources, or offer encouragement.

Tip: "I met someone who could really help with your current project. I'll introduce you two."



Pay It Forward: Just as you benefit from others' wisdom, your journey can inspire and help others in your network. Share your successes, lessons, and the support you've received.

Example: A colleague who supported your career may find it rewarding to see you pay that support forward to others.



Foster Mutual Growth: Encourage your network to challenge and support each other. When everyone focuses on collective growth, the network becomes a powerful tool for everyone involved.

The Lifelong Value of Your Personal Advisory Network

Your Personal Advisory Network is an ongoing investment that pays lifelong dividends. It helps you grow, make informed decisions, and stay motivated throughout your career.

Key takeaways:

- Engage actively with your network and leverage their expertise.
- Pay it forward by helping others and fostering mutual support.
- Evolve your network as your career advances, always staying aligned with your changing goals.

Remember, your network is a dynamic asset that continuously shapes and reshapes your path to success. By nurturing and expanding your connections, you set yourself up for lasting growth and achievement.

This table will help you track the steps of building and leveraging your Personal Advisory Network in a structured way. You can easily fill in and refer to your information as you build and maintain connections.

Step	Action	Example	Your Notes
1. Assess Your Current Network	List the people currently in your network and their areas of expertise.	John. Leadership advice, industry insights	
		Sarah. Career transition support, motivational guidance	
2. Identify Your Needs	What areas of expertise or support do you need right now?	- Leadership strategies for senior management	
		- Networking opportunities in the tech industry	
3. Fill in the Gaps - Identify types of individuals you need to add to your network.	Where can you find them? LinkedIn, online communities, virtual events, industry events	- Industry expert in tech leadership	
		- Experienced mentor for career transitions	
4. Action Plan for Engagement	How will you reach out to potential new advisors?	- Reach out via LinkedIn with a personalised message	
		- Attend industry-specific webinars and events to meet new people	
5. Nurturing and Leveraging Relationships	What actions will you take to maintain and engage with existing advisors?	- Schedule quarterly check-ins with John for leadership feedback	
		- Share articles and insights on career transitions with Sarah	