1.
Title card

2.
Coming up in this session, we'll be reminding ourselves of the business of networking, and how it can be most influential. We'll put "why" front and centre in your communications, and thinking about how we cascade our influence on both local and global levels. We'll look at some data around what inclusion efforts produce the best results, and finish with some tools and tips for more impactful presentation and events, and inclusive meetings,

3.

When we talk about network influence, remember, we're not just talking about "a network" as an object, the job is networking – it's a verb as well as a noun.

Often people will think about their influence skills with reference to what they do best – and these usually fall into either operational or personal.

But effective leaders need to learn to employ networks for strategic purposes.

This idea is taken from an article by Harvard Business Review, which I've put a link to in your further reading, it explores the habits of new leaders. But we've broken down what they mean by these three key terms: operational, personal and strategic on the next slide. As we go through this, you may want to make notes in your worksheet as to how your activities fit into each of the three categories.

4.
Operational work involves getting things done efficiently, where your focus is on the everyday, maintaining capacities and functions of your group or network. This would usually be the kind of person comfortable operating a scrum team or project management - where the focus is on the internal team. For networks this is certainly about making sure everyone can operate within their roles, is empowered and accountable.

Personal networking is about enhancing personal and professional development. Often this is about your own development, but can also be used to bring together previously unconnected dots, laying the ground for better communication and collaboration by providing referrals, information and contacts. This is the kind of person who is comfortable at a networking event or conference - where the focus is on individuals and connectivity.

To move into strategic networking there needs to be some initial work in figuring out the impact of change, future priorities and challenges to operations, so that stakeholders can be approached with intention, rather than by happenstance at a networking event. The goal is then not only to make a connection, but to get support and commitment to your strategy. Strategic networker push forward innovation while dispersing power and influence - which should be the focus of resilient and sustainable networks.

What differentiates a leader from a manager, the research tells us, is the ability to figure out where to go, and to enlist the people and groups necessary to get there. Recruiting stakeholders, lining up allies and sympathisers, diagnosing the political landscape, and brokering conversations among unconnected parties are all part of a leader's job. As they step up to the leadership transition, some managers accept their growing dependence on others and seek to transform it into mutual influence. Others dismiss such work as "political" and, as a result, undermine their ability to advance their goals.

Strategic networking can be difficult for emerging leaders because it absorbs a significant amount of the time and energy that managers usually devote to meeting their many operational demands. This is one reason why many managers drop their strategic networking precisely when they need it most. The trick is not to hide in the operational or personal network but to develop it into a more strategic one.

5.

We're going to look at a diagram of the golden circle, which was taken from a TED talk by Simon Sinek, it's not long and worth a watch to see some illustrations of how companies, particularly in marketing, have used WHY to better convince consumers of WHAT. We've put the link in your further reading, but for now I'll break down the key point.

We've already explored the how, what, why, where of your network, but here's an extra lens on using "why" in all your network-related conversations with stakeholders. Because particularly when we talk to senior stakeholders, too often, we can push the WHAT we have to offer – and I think this will be because of concerns of wasting someone's time and wanting to get to the point, but actually, taking time to explain the WHY of something, your motivation, has greater influence on the minds of others. They can envision their future in what you're selling.

An example in our case might be that you begin by saying: I think we need to be more innovative in our product design. We should encourage more diversity of thought to challenge our status quo. To do this I think we should examine how we run our regular meetings to make them more inclusive.

As with all these things, be critical, because it might otherwise suggest leaders should be appealing to the limbic brain of emotion and instinct, rather than our critical faculties, and I think that good leaders do both. They present values you can believe in, but offer information and opportunity to think for yourself. Whenever we're talking about how to drive influence, we mustn't do so without thinking about the wider impact. Influence, of course, can be used recklessly, particularly when we're talking about inspiring an emotional reaction. So whenever we talk here about influencing change, we're talking about considered, ethical change, and when we talk about leaders, we're also talking about role models.

6.

Sometimes when we're put on the spot to explain our motivations, we can freeze, because it feels like a personal challenge, rather than a simple explanation of strategy. For this reason it's a good idea to practice explaining your "why" in common terms, to people who aren't familiar with your network. An even more organised version of this would be something like this example from Zurich Insurance who created an FAQ for Overcoming Objections to becoming a Network Representative. This was based on the observed need of members to have better conversations with their line managers about the benefits of their network involvement. Any network member could then pick this up when preparing to have these crucial conversations. Remember to start with why, and then use supportive material like references to the D&I strategy and your business objectives, your sponsor's support, and practical things like how and when you participate.

In your worksheets, use the example template to think about questions you typically face, and how you could begin to create a similar FAQ to support anyone else in your or other networks to put forward a convincing response.

7.

A reminder with influence that we can't just rely on our own impressions of how we're encouraging change, we have to try and monitor it too. So here's another example of how an anonymised organisation, in this case a bank, has laid out ways that networks can demonstrate that they are having a positive influence. They refer to their networks as Employee Resource Groups, or ERGs.

1) Our bank fully recognises our Employee Resource Groups as adding value to the organisation. Adding value is key here, they're not just there to represent or tick boxes.
2) Diverse growth in membership in grade, function, non-affinity, etc. It's often assumed that a network is diverse in some way because of its nature. But this is not often measured, and we'll think about the more in the "widening your network" module.
3) Impact of outputs and actions – ie tangible, visible internally and externally. You're influence has been successful when you can directly relate actions and outputs - meaning it's not a coincidence
4) Visibility of leaders and sponsors is high with role model stories in comms, films and on the inclusion hub. Showing commitment and generating content is a double win for your network.
5) Event feedback. Not just whether people enjoyed it, but are your projections for the impact you want it to have a reality?
6) Achievement of strategic aims and objectives. Which is simply a reminder to always refer back to strategy
7) External recognition as inclusive employer: ERG champions recognised in awards, networks achieving awards, and improvement in benchmarking. We've spoken before about not letting this become a distraction from the work you should be doing for your members, but studies and awards by other people, properly used, can mean they measure your impact for you.
8) ERG leads, members, sponsors on external lists. So not only celebrating the business achievements, but recognising the efforts of individuals
9) Social media and external media coverage. In particular this a good opportunity to engage with data monitoring tools and get some quantitative measurements.
10) Customer impact and feedback, external and internal partner feedback. Crucially reminding us that your influence extends not only to internal members and

stakeholders, but your end customers and what you're ultimately putting out into the world.

8.
Let's pause for a moment and consider What is the most important thing for you to do if you don't hit your success targets? We've given four options for you to think about (or you can create your own if you like). Pause now to reflect then I'll talk through those options.

- Communicate 'why' to the organisation:
  It is important to be humble and keep people in the loop if you've not hit published targets, there can be many reasons why and the messaging needs to reflect the efforts that have been made and the changes that will be made to ensure future success.

- Re-evaluate your mission and objectives:
  This may be necessary in some circumstances; it may be that your timing or measures have been unrealistic or that external factors have made them less achievable, but it may be more to do with your method than your goal.

- Assess whether resources have been sufficient:
  It's likely that you won't get as much budget allocated as you could use, and your time is always gold dust. Consider how you're requesting resources from key stakeholders and how you're putting across the business case.

- Go out to the business for more support:
  If this is a route you'd like to take, it may be worthwhile doing stakeholder mapping to establish who the influential people are in the business, how you can get time and buy in from them and what exactly it is that you're asking them for. We'll be looking at that in your Sponsors and Stakeholders module.

9.
In a moment, we're going to look at a case study of a network that examined how it can expand through its global organisation, while accounting for local differences. But first let's go through some of the foundational considerations for any network when operating on both a global, national and local platform.

The main three areas we need to consider when taking a strategy global (or just beyond one office) are the legal status, societal culture, and company environment.

Legal: Be aware of the legal situation in other countries. For this organisation with their LGBT+ network they had to consider not only where LGBT+ people were criminalized, but where their rights were not protected, and where things like marriage recognition would cause issues surrounding relocation.

Culture: As we know the letter of the law does not always translate to cultural attitude. Even within a single country, it can be particularly noticeable between metropolitan areas and rural. So when you multiply that by country too, you can see how carefully you have to construct or adjust your overall strategy to be successful in a different setting.

Company Environment: Relates to how a company wants to apply it's values globally, which could potentially be at odds with local law or culture, and also the autonomy it grants its local leaders to apply the wider diversity and inclusion strategy.

So whether you want to expand your network globally, or nationally, think about taking these three steps.

Set your purpose at a high-level, nationally or globally but calibrate and implement locally / by location **-** this is an extension of a working strategy, and requires trust between local leaders.

Recruit allies and advocates at all levels within the organisation. This goes for locations too. We'll be looking further at this in widening your network.

Use sustained messaging and campaigns to drive your purpose across multiple-offices and global comms. You've already explored this in Brand and Identity, but it's a further challenge to see how your brand is perceived not as a whole, but how it varies by location. That way you can have a single voice, but different goals by location which will be addressed with appropriate tone, or communications planning.

10.

This is a real example that's been anonymised relating to a growing network within a consulting organisation. They laid out a framework for considering action within different environments globally, which can help inform a localised approach to networks. This will be relevant to any network, and even organisations that aren't global may find differences between locations nationally.

The first column represents conditions whereby the network or its members are restricted legally, culturally and/or organisationally. In this instance you may not yet be able to change specifics, but you can generally reinforce principles such as tolerance and fairness, and the unacceptability of discrimination and harassment, and duty of care procedures for harassment, discrimination or legal and physical threat.

The second column represents environments that are mixed, unclear or in transition. Here they Identify targeted ways to enhance equality and inclusiveness by exploiting pockets of opportunity. Where the law is not a barrier, but the local culture or management is, use local leaders, networks and communications to promote change at a local level.

And finally for networks that are operating in a supportive environment, they can connect with other regions to share best practice, lend support and build momentum. It's their opportunity to lead a forward-thinking strategy and invest in innovation and measuring impact, as they are in a fortunate enough position to not be fighting so hard for existence.

In your worksheets consider how your network aims and activities differ on a local or global scale.

11.

Our opportunities for influence are huge, and ever changing. So in an effort to try and resist getting swept up in a zeitgeist, keep an eye out for any new studies which help us prioritise the type of efforts we should engage in.

This data makes a convincing argument for why it's so important to engage stakeholders, and not simply talk at them, or demand compulsory change. It's from Harvard Business Review and we've put the link in your further reading. It assess the percentage change over five years in representation among managers. The negative numbers in yellow and red show a decline in representation among particular demographics according to the type of D&I program that was instigated. And on the next slide, blue will show positive. Grey is incomplete data.

Executives tend to favour an approach to diversity which trains people in behaviors that boil down to dos and don'ts - which are easy to understand and defend. But, this doesn't match up with what we know about how to motivate people to make changes. Decades of social science research shows that you don't get managers on board by blaming and shaming them with rules and reeducation.

Do people who undergo training usually shed their biases? Researchers have been examining that question since before World War II, in nearly a thousand studies and I've put one on your further reading. It turns out that while people are easily taught to respond correctly to a questionnaire about bias, they soon forget the right answers. The positive effects of diversity training rarely last beyond a day or two, and a number of studies suggest that it can activate bias or spark a backlash – but nearly half of midsize companies use it, as do nearly all the *Fortune* 500.

Regarding the Job tests effort. The observed suggestion as to why this didn't positively increase representation and level the playing field in recruitment, is simply that not everyone gets tested. And the results are interpreted differently. People already represented in the company, or in a privileged position will get a pass based on reputation without results.

Grievance systems that are based internally unfortunately often see reporters face a backlash. This is why we don't see a positive increase in diversity when these are implemented. They are often their to quell dissent, rather than address it. Organisations have seen better results with non-retaliation by using an external agency for grievances.

12.

So what does work: A number of companies have gotten consistently positive results with tactics that don't focus on control. They apply three basic principles: engage managers in solving the problem, expose them to people from different groups, and encourage social accountability for change.

When someone's beliefs and behavior are out of sync, that person experiences what psychologists call "cognitive dissonance." Experiments show that people have a strong tendency to "correct" dissonance by changing either the beliefs or the behavior. So, if you prompt them to act in ways that support a particular view, their opinions shift toward that view. Ask them to write an essay on environmentalism, and even skeptics will come to see some merits. When managers actively help boost diversity in their companies, something similar happens: They begin to think of themselves as diversity champions – and that is the ultimate aim of engaging them.

Some people have previously asked why the decline in representation among white men in these programs, but don't forget that if we're talking percentage change, it reflects growing diversity, not specifically attrition of white men.

Voluntary training means that the people taking it already have a personal investment. So not all training is bad, which is a relief, it just depends whether you're being taught a specific set of behaviours to follow, or you're encouraged to expand your experience and critical thinking.

Self-managed team tend to perform well because they have a sense of ownership, trust, responsibility, and make best use of their specific talents.

Cross-training is excellent to gain greater perspective on different groups of people. By working with them, rather than about them, it encourages more direct behaviour change.

By the same token, participating in recruitment drives is not only good because you're increasing a pipeline, but because you're taking the time to understand what the challenges are for that audience, and gaining empathy.

Mentoring is excellent for that reason too. We not only provide opportunity for the person we're mentoring, but can learn from them too. It also uses the power of networking to make greater connections throughout the organisation. And we've seen how influential that can be.

Diversity task forces have a huge potential for change, and this is really a sign that the organisation has invested resources in solving a problem, and takes the issue seriously. So it's a strong reflection of a changing culture. They are also much more likely to contain experts, and the ability to measure specific impact.

And diversity managers perform a similar function, although with perhaps fewer resources and focus than a task force.

I recommend you now think carefully and honestly in your worksheet about the types of programs you observe in your organisation, and what you're doing to make sure that you invest time and energy in proven positive efforts.

13.

You may have seen some version of this pie chart, which states that only 7% of how we interpret communications is in the words, 38% is in the tone of voice, and 55% is body language. And that's because poor Professor Albert Mehrabian's model has been widely misused for a long time now. It doesn't make sense does it, if you think about it: would you understand 93% of a talk in a foreign language you don't speak purely by tone and body language? So let's demystify Mehrabian to see what point he was actually making. He said that:

- 7% of a message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in the words that are spoken.
- 38% of a message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% of a message pertaining to feelings and attitudes is in facial expression.

Mehrabian did not intend the statistic to be used or applied freely to all communications and meaning. He clarified:

Please note that this and other equations regarding relative importance of verbal and nonverbal messages were derived from experiments dealing with communications of feelings and attitudes (i.e., like-dislike). Unless a communicator is talking about their feelings or attitudes, these equations are not applicable. The Mehrabian formula then was established in situations where there was incongruence between words and expression. That is, where the words did not match the facial expression: specifically in Mehrabian's research people tended to believe the expression they saw, not the words spoken.

The essence of the model is to not place undue reliance on words alone for conveying communications which carry potentially emotional implications.

As employee networks, a large part of your activities will involve conveying emotional messages, so it can be useful to think about it on a scale, where dialling up your body language and style of delivery increases influence in emotive messages - providing they match your words - and it can be dialled down where you only need to deliver factual information - which could easily take the form of written updates. This not only helps you focus your comms, but it can help save you time, and emotional energy.

14.

It's too big and too practical a subject to do justice here, but we do want to offer some tips on impactful presentation, because as network leaders, it can sometimes feel like standing in front of an audience and making some kind of statement is 90% of our job.

If you don't master all the following tips, at least let this first one comfort you. An audience is more likely to listen to you if they can relate to you as an individual. Nobody enjoys a talking head or corporate announcement. You may want to illustrate your ideas by telling a personal story, or adding a bit of humour if you're comfortable with it. Previously, we explored the many interpretations of authenticity. In this context it's about using it as a tool to be relaxed when you present - not necessarily baring your soul.

Your message will only be relevant if you're targeting the right people. Remember, you're not just talking into a void, you're starting a conversation. Look into what level of expertise you're speaking to and consider what kind of language they'll respond best to. Do you need to keep it simple, or can they handle jargon? Do you need to be more anecdotal or offer statistics? Do they work in tech, or sales? All these considerations should shape the way you present your talk - even if the basic message is the same. In addition to this, you should listen to any live feedback in case you need to adjust what you're saying, either in tone or clarity. Asking if there are any questions can help with this.

Everyone gets nervous, and one of the ways to reduce that is to practice what you'll say. It's not about learning a script, but knowing where your touchpoints are can help you stay on track. You'll also be entering familiar territory when you step on stage, rather than running through multiple scenarios for the first time. Try writing your main message first, then breaking it down into bullet points that demonstrate your idea. Then practice in front of a mirror, or recording yourself and playing it back, or take a friend for coffee and chat with them about it. Whatever works best for you.

We all have verbal and physical habits, and you shouldn't feel self-conscious about it. But you can become aware so that you can control them better if you want to.
Are you using your hands to emphasise a point, or are they always waving around in a way that gets distracting? A common habit is "umming" and "ahhing". This is your brain's way of giving you more time to think, while letting your audience know that you're not done talking. Try to develop the confidence to pause and breathe instead of vocalising. The silence really isn't as long as it feels to you.

We've all been there - essentially having a document read aloud to us. Try to use visuals in a way that supports what you say in an engaging way. Maybe it summarises or bookends what you're saying, but don't let it distract. Comedy memes may be funny, but is that all your audience is looking at? As you practice, ask yourself whether this slide helps the audience, or whether it's just something you can say. You should also be prepared to share materials before or after the event for people with access needs – so this may involve putting explanatory text in the notes section, rather than on the slide.

It's OK to mess up, that's how we learn. It's OK to say "I don't know". It's OK to ask questions. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it does make things easier.
If you've never spoken before, look out for opportunities to shadow a peer, sit on stage near a panel without having to speak, or a 1 minute-slot (lightning talk) at a conference.

Breathing and ideas are both called "inspiration". We anticipate ideas, and inhale as long as it takes us to be able to speak our mind.
Of course, sometimes we don't quite know our mind before we start speaking, then we run out of breath, stop speaking, and our pulse quickens. Wait for inspiration, and breathe.

15.

This example came to us from Protiviti, but we've seen similar approaches in many networks, and that's to create a template for running successful events. Ideally you'll store this somewhere that everyone can access, and also contribute to. They have six main considerations, but you might add more in your own version. The first tip you'll recognise from the previous slide, and that's to consider your audience. You may want to expand yours with specific previous examples and how that's changes the nature of what you did. Logistics, and this will be very specific to your organisation, and location - what are the typical costs, capacity, how is it usually funded, perhaps? Uniqueness - I think this is largely to make sure you have an impactful centre on which to base the event around. Don't forget it's not enough to have a great speaker, for example, it has to be relevant. Don't be afraid to tell your speaker what you hope to achieve through them attending, they will appreciate it. Marketing - one of the most useful things you could do for a template for others is to put down any rules or permissions you need to consider about marketing, particularly if it's going external. Networking, never forgetting the purpose and strength of your employee network is engaging people, so what is your strategy around that? And assessment, not just following up with a thanks, but actively seeking to measure your impact. Do you have a standardised way you do this that you could share with other networks to contribute to this box.

There's space in your worksheets for you to start your own. But we advise you turn it into something digital, shareable and editable.

16.

Because we like to plan and want to turn that into something helpful for inclusive networks – we've also created some tips on running inclusive meetings, with considerations for before, during and after – which is mostly about adhering to a structure. Running meetings, presentations and events isn't just about what you want to say, it's making sure everyone can understand and engage with it too. An example here is from Bechtel who created a little guide which they published and distributed among meeting rooms as a handy reminder to let everyone have a voice, and it includes space for people to note down their own commitments to this.

17.

Impromptu meetings can make people feel excluded if they're not around when you make decisions. It tends to encourage views held by people who are more vocal and ready to offer an instant opinion. While there is nothing wrong with open collaboration, understand the difference between group-working with the right people and a meeting which should be inclusive.

Clearly stating the objective of the meeting will make it more appealing to people with limited time, such as executives, part-timers, or people on leave who may wish to tune in. It gives time to digest the subject and not have to "think on the fly" for people with cognitive issues or anxiety.

The most common way now would be to use an online meeting platform. There are benefits and pitfalls to most options, so scope out what works for you. Give the option for people to dial-in from a phone if you can, as not everyone has internet access. Use the instant messaging options as a way for people to contribute if they don't want to or can't speak.

If you are sharing slides, make sure they are clearly formatted so that people who use visual assisted technology have the option to run through it before the meeting.

Resist the urge to use fancy graphics to communicate information alone, give a summary in words too. It's also generally difficult for most people to listen and read at the same time.

Pointing a webcam at a whiteboard is not an alternative to sharing online if the other person cannot see it. Resist token gestures of inclusivity if they don't actually work, because people will feel like they're causing a problem if they then speak against it.

Keep a standard note in your meeting invites that says:

"If anyone has accessibility needs for this meeting, get in touch and we'll do our best to make it more inclusive."

For example, while it might not be practical to provide an interpreter for your meeting, you may be able to offer a transcription after the meeting. Try to find creative ways to close gaps and always be honest about what you can achieve.

18.
Some people can really become anxious if meetings start late, run over, or veer off course. They need clear expectations to feel part of the meeting they have prepared for. A lot of people are short on time, and disrespecting that means they can switch off before you've even started talking. You'll get more done in the long run if you stick to a plan, and don't get distracted with debate or work that can be done outside of the meeting.

Don't let it turn into a two-way conversation if you've invited a group of people. Think carefully about who needs to be there, and make sure they're included.
Two facilitators will make your meetings flow much more smoothly.

Have one person direct the conversation and keep the agenda on track.

Use a second person to monitor the chat for issues, check the technology is working properly and people have access to the meeting, and make sure anyone with specific needs is catered for.

As a facilitator (and even if you're not), use more than way to phrase a key piece of information. People have different ways of learning and remembering, and it helps ensure a shared understanding.

Some people are more introverted and find it difficult to speak up in meetings, so if you can, think about common questions that other people might want to ask, even if you know the answer.

A facilitator should keep an eye on incoming instant messages or emails in case there are urgent issues to attend to, like a drop in connection or clarifying question.

Some issues might be best to deal with over instant messages, rather than interrupting the meeting.
If the same people always lead the discussion, try rotating roles to see if a meeting might be more effective coming from a different perspective.

Don't dump this on someone at the last minute though. Ask if they'd be happy to take a certain role in an upcoming meeting, and give them any support they need to prepare.

Allow people to try out new ways of guiding a meeting and reserve judgment for afterwards, with respectful feedback.

19.
Good meetings end with actions and a shared understanding.

Summaries help keep a record of decisions and make sure everyone is on the same page, even if they weren't able to attend or follow the meeting. You can send out a transcription in an accessible word document, and/or send a video recording of the meeting. An extra short summary also helps people with limited time or attention span.

When you send out a summary, also include requests for feedback. Try asking specific questions at different times to vary the feedback. For example: could you follow everything that was discussed? Is the summary we're sending out clear? Do you feel like you're able to speak up in meetings? You're more likely to get a response if you ask 1 or 2 questions frequently, rather than sending out a mass questionnaire.

You'll be busy during the meeting focussing on the issues at hand, but take some time later to think about whether there are ways to be more inclusive (and don't forget diversity too).

For example:

Are the people at the meeting becoming homogenous? This applies to diversity of people and ideas. It's great to feel like one team working well together, but a variety of opinions and experiences is also highly valuable.

Share any actions that have been taken as a result of the meeting. Everyone will feel like it's a good use of their time if they can see specific results.

If you observe anything, or get feedback about how to make a meeting more inclusive, then try it out at the next meeting and ask immediately if it has improved the situation.

Work with the people it affects to reach a consensus - it's not all on you.

20.
Finding ways to be positively influential as a leader can often produce a feeling that you want to push harder against others and loudly speak your truth. But to be strategic, this

effort should only begin with yourself and lead to creating opportunities for others. By understanding your leadership style, personal power, and influence, you can make greater connections which empower your members. Network influence is determined by collective effort aligned to strategies that work. Dispersing power and influence is an ultimate goal for inclusive leaders and progressive working. We see it in successful and sustainable employee networks, and we also see it in modern agile working environments, as we'll illustrate in a future module. Challenging old ideas of who really needs power and influence, and why, is a very liberating experience.

Next module, it's time to put your plans into action as we look at some practical tips, tools and examples of network communications.