

# Exploring & Launching Your Network: A Guide To Essential Steps

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## SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

- If you are just getting started – wanting to identify interested individuals and figure out the basics of the early stages, you might want to review the section below titled “*Network Exploration.*”
- Maybe you are already underway – possibly you have identified some key people, maybe that you have actually had a meeting or consultation of interested parties, and now feel you have a sense of the ‘big picture.’
- Wherever you are in the process you may be wondering how to ‘activate’ the network – to get it into productive action, you may want to read the section “*Effectively Launching Your Network.*”
- If you feel your network is ‘up and running,’ you probably want to use the associated “*Network Health Assessment Tool.*”

## A REMINDER --

that as you go through these steps, there has to be full disclosure; complete integrity and transparency in your communication with others. Those with whom you talk must first know *your agenda*. Then they need to know whom else you’re talking with. Confidential information (or comments you feel may be negative or judgmental) must remain confidential. In bringing a network to life you will be judged on your vision, sphere of knowledge and relationships, *and the extent*

*to which you can be trusted.* Always remember, there has to be trust in three things: the purpose (its clarity and perceived value), the people (leadership), and the process (how things go together, decisions are made, value & specificity of outcomes, etc.). And, then, does your vision or stated purpose meet these tests: Is it a God idea or your private idea? Is it too big/complex for any single ministry to accomplish alone? If effectively addressed will it have both Kingdom value and value for each participating ministry or individual?

## NETWORK EXPLORATION

Score on a scale of 1-10 (10 full completion -- 1 hardly started)

1. Have you articulated a simple, clear, compelling ‘case statement’ that defines what you believe the network’s purpose is?\*\*\* Is *your* “agenda” clear? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you identified what you feel are at least 50% of the key players in your issue sector? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you asked each person contacted whom *they* feel should be involved? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you identified whom you or others feel are the most influential or critical to have engaged in the network? Why? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Have you interacted personally (face to face, skype, phone calls, etc.) with the majority of these ‘influentials?’ \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you asked each what they feel are the highest priority issues that must be addressed in the sector – to possibly see ‘breakthroughs?’ \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you determined that at least a 40-50% (rarely all!) of the influentials are prepared to sit down one time and ask, with others, “In order to see real breakthroughs in our sector, is there anything we might do more effectively if we work together rather than if we continue to operate independently?” \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Network Exploration Health Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Maximum score is 7 X 10 = 70) If your score is:

**60-70** you’re on pretty solid footing!

**50-60** you may want to spend some more time on those low score sectors.

**40-50** you need to stop and really think through what you need to prioritize for work.

**Under 40** you’d do well to ‘unpack’ each element and make sure you understand what’s involved.

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**\*\*WHOSE AGENDA IS IT?**

In talking about your network vision with others, you can and must initially have your own clear vision for the network’s purpose and potential. You are wanting to raise interest, motivate a desire to know more, and encourage people to possibly actually be involved. But *the specifics of the network’s priorities and practical action must eventually flow out of the total group’s thinking and working together*. This means that when talking with these individuals it is always important, of course, to ask what *they feel* are the highest priority issues. But, selection of an issue or issues for the network to address needs to wait until a majority of these people can think and work together on those priorities. You want maximum ‘ownership’ of the network’s vision and priorities (see “Launching”). So, in the early stages, what do you say?

*Let’s say, for example that your general issue is “Human Trafficking.” Talking with interested people might go something like:*

*“There seems to be wide agreement that human trafficking is a growing, major problem. There’s also agreement that trafficking strikes at the heart of Kingdom view on the value of the human individual. There also seems to be wide agreement that believers should be active, playing a leadership role. Finally, there seems to be agreement that the scale of the challenge is so great that we could likely have greater impact by working together rather than everyone just ‘doing their own thing.’ As the network develops, participants will have to develop a consensus among themselves what the priorities are for action. My main concern at this point is simply asking, first, ‘What is your personal level of interest in the topic? Then, if you are interested, would you be willing to meet with others to talk about possible work **together** – to explore the nature of the challenge and possible priorities for action, etc.?’ That meeting may be face to face, via Skype or some other means.”*

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## EFFECTIVELY LAUNCHING YOUR NETWORK

### JUST ONE MORE REMINDER --

as you work on bringing people together (face to face or virtually) remember they all have perceptions of collaboration (networks, partnerships, etc.). There have been a lot of bad experiences, frustrating experiences, disappointments, etc. Often there is much more talk than productive action. That's part of why effective collaboration is such a challenge. For many, collaboration doesn't have a very good

reputation! *It's also why what you are doing is so important.* (For a summary of key reason to collaborate, check this web link: <http://visionsynergy.net/why-collaborate/>). If you have been through the exploration steps outlined above (or very similar) and you want your network to move from talk to action, you may be ready to actually take your network to the next steps.

## EFFECTIVELY LAUNCHING YOUR NETWORK

Depending on where you are in your Network Development may find some of the later points here more relevant. And, of course, you can adjust your score accordingly!

Score on a scale of 1-10 (10 I'm aware of it, I'm taking it seriously, it's in my plan -- 1 Hadn't even give this much consideration and need to figure out my action plan.)

1. Are at least a 40-50% (rarely all!) of the influentials I've talked to prepared to sit down *one time* and ask, with others, "In order to see real breakthroughs in our sector, is there anything we might do more effectively if we work together rather than if we continue to operate independently?" \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are those you've identified ready to *take the time necessary* to 'unpack' the challenge, prioritize those issues, come to consensus and decide which one(s) should be addressed first, and then determine practical action steps for this vision? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Based on the conversations you've held and input you've received, have you done a DRAFT agenda in advance of your first working meeting – and circulated it for feedback to all invitees? \_\_\_\_\_
4. When you finally meet, will you or have you taken the time to do an overview of the sector, identifying key elements and agreeing on key issues? You want all participants on at least roughly the same page – working from the same information! \_\_\_\_\_
5. Does your plan for your working meeting allow for time to break the challenge down into 'bite sized' elements, encouraging small group discussion of those issues, and then feedback and clarification with everyone? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Has this resulted in a 'big list' of key issues that need to be addressed? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Can you/will you prioritize this list – the group getting it down to 1, 2, or 3 elements considered highest priority? That will be your list of limited, achievable objectives. \_\_\_\_\_
8. In your action plan have you/will you define who does what, when, and how you will evaluate progress? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you/will you have an agreed communication plan: who does it, when, with what purpose & content? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Does/will your first working or network 'formation' meeting have a strong emphasis on prayer – pausing regularly to pray for each other and over the issues you're discussing? And, externally, do you have others praying for and supporting this \_\_\_\_\_

vital work? \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Network Formation Health Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Maximum score is  $10 \times 10 = 100$  – tough, eh?) If your score is:

**85-100** you're on pretty solid footing!

**70-85** you may want to spend some more time on those low score sectors.

**60-70** you need to stop and really think through what you need to prioritize for work.

**Under 60** you'd do well to 'unpack' each element and make sure you understand what's involved.