My good friend Claudio is from Corsica. Living in Rome, he told me he was interviewing for a job at a Spanish hotel chain. That same morning I had received a thoughtful happy birthday email from my friend Samir, another wonderful friend from Jordan who lives in Madrid and works at the same hotel chain.

Claudio’s network already included a key decision maker for his interview process. He just didn’t know it did. We all have networks full of potential. It’s a fact of life.

So, we’re getting into the substance of things

Begin by fully understanding the network you already have. Over time, your network has grown, including each new friend, peers at school, and colleagues from work.

You have already invested many hours keeping this network alive, reaping diverse benefits and satisfactions, as well. You’ve enjoyed parties, football matches, and dinner outings with friends. Professional opportunities like conferences, seminars, and meetings with work colleagues brought you closer to your ambitions.

2.1 WHY IS YOUR NETWORK THE WAY IT IS?

Usually, your network is a result of accidents, luck, or a series of coincidences bringing you close to some people and pushing others away. Think of the 2000 movie Cast Away, for example. Tom Hanks landed accidentally on an island in the middle of nowhere. He couldn’t be
His accidental and absurd “network” is a battered football with a happy face.

Your own character, personality, and temperament profoundly influence the development of your network as well. Do you feel better in the company of others, or are you very independent? If you prefer the first option, when luck or accidents introduce you to new people, you will choose to stop, talk to them, and even try to set up another meeting. If your own company or a few special friends suit you better, however, you will likely limit new encounters, even to the point of avoiding newcomers before they see you.

In the same way, a very personal chemistry influences all new encounters, making you feel comfortable with some people but not with others. This chemistry can inspire you to forge new links and discard others. Love at first sight is an extreme, but perfect, example of personal chemistry at work. We will take unusual measures to be near someone who makes us feel that special attraction.

The last and most important factor to play a key role in shaping your current personal network is, of course, your strategy. A shy, introverted executive can boast a large, multicultural, and powerful network because, at a very early age, he or she chose to actively grow their networks. And it’s never too late to begin.

**Analyze your current network’s key generators**

Let’s do some work, shall we? Being more aware of what has shaped your network to date will help you separate the parts that depend on you from the parts that don’t. More importantly, you will consider how to influence your network’s evolution. The exercise is designed to help you respond to this question: why is your network the way it is?

So, draw a circle and divide it into four quadrants, according to the influence various factors have played in your relationship-building. The four factors you need to place on the diagram are: Accident or Luck, Personal Preference for Socializing, Chemistry with New Contacts, and Personal Will or Strategy.

In the following diagram we can see Rob’s responses. His personal network is, above all, a product of Accident or Luck. Effort and personal strategy have had a minor influence, probably because he’d never really thought of how he could shape his own network. The second most important factor is his Chemistry with certain people. He