

Building Social Networks for Speed

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Thoughts on Networks

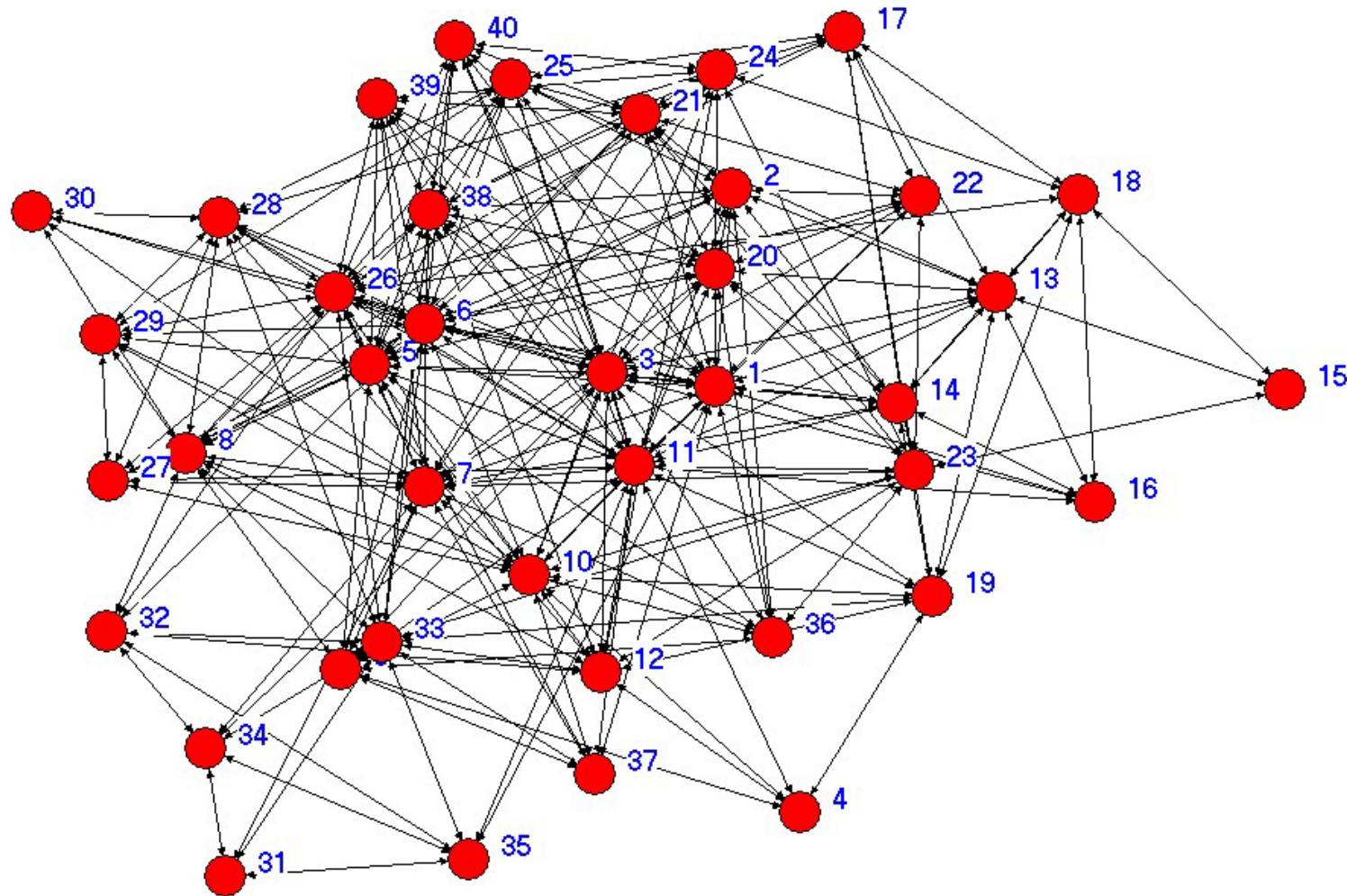
“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”

“There are three types of death: brain death, heart death, and death by being out of the network.”

“I’m interested in friendship, not networks. The first is real, the second is manipulative.”

Financial Services Firm – Key Account Team

Internal Advice Network – Who goes to whom for task advice?



Social Capital

- The assets in relationships that can be leveraged to accomplish a purpose
- Like other types of capital
 - Must invest
 - Payoff in short-term and/or long-term
 - Can be more or less liquid
- Unlike other types of capital
 - Using it *can* increase it; *not* using it can decrease it
 - Completely interdependent, not independent: entirely dependent on what happens between people

Social Capital and Social Networks

- Networks are movies of social capital: the dynamics of relationship structures
- Different configurations of social capital are effective for different purposes
- Social capital provides benefits for individuals and for the groups or networks within which they operate

Roles in Social Networks

- **Central Connectors**
 - Directly connected to the most people
 - Directly connected to important, scarce resources
- **Information Brokers**
 - Indirectly connected to the most people
 - Information always passes through them
 - Can become gatekeepers

Roles in Social Networks

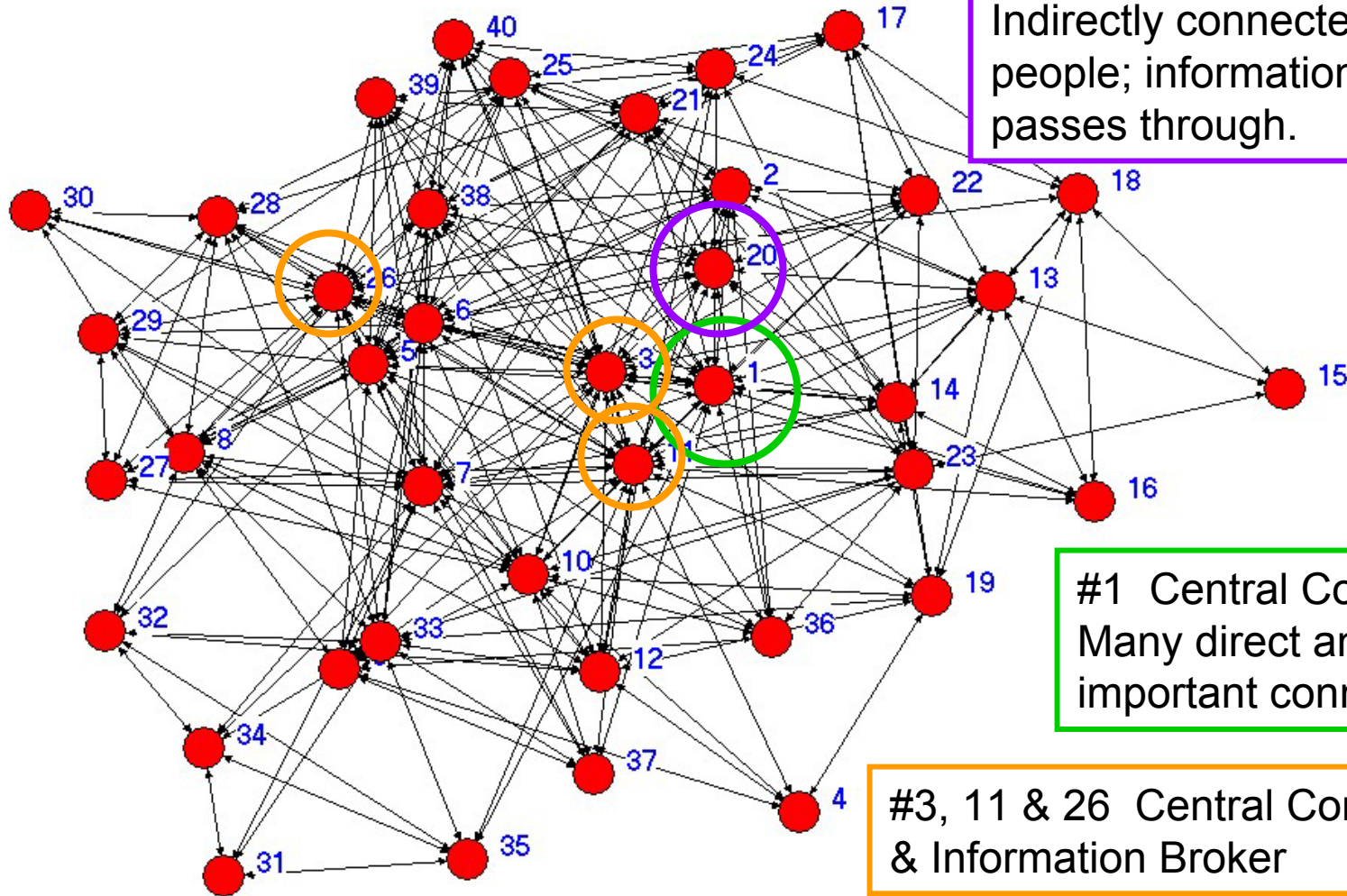
- Peripheral Specialists
 - Experts, focus on depth in field and minimum possible connection to the network
- Boundary Spanners
 - Link two or more networks together
 - Links to the “outside world”

Internal Advice Network – Once per Month or More

#20 Information Broker:
Indirectly connected to many
people; information always
passes through.

#1 Central Connector:
Many direct and
important connections

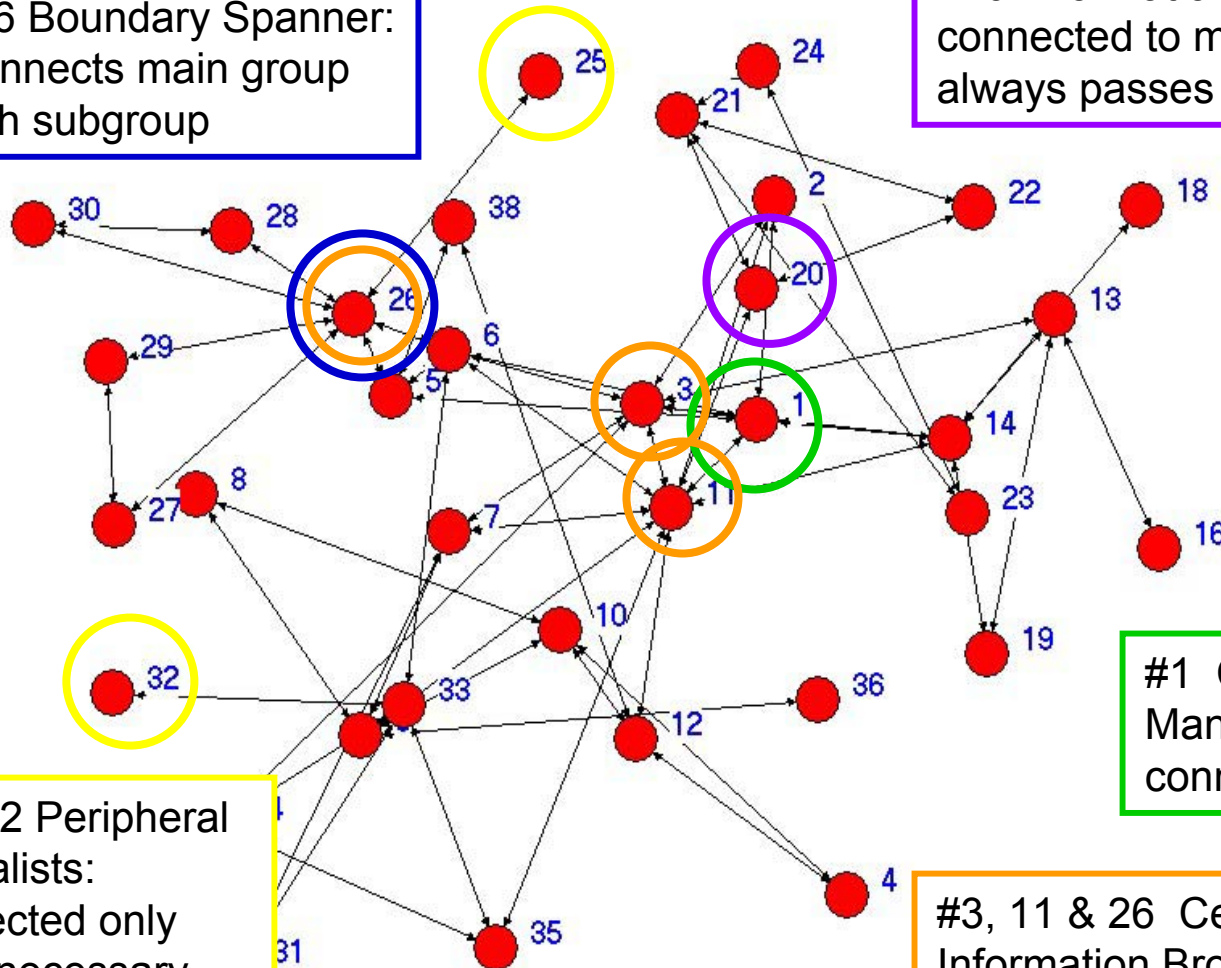
#3, 11 & 26 Central Connector
& Information Broker



Internal Advice Network – 2-3 Times Per Week or More

#26 Boundary Spanner:
Connects main group
with subgroup

#20 Information Broker: Indirectly
connected to many people; information
always passes through.



#1 Central Connector:
Many direct and important
connections

#25, 32 Peripheral
Specialists:
Connected only
when necessary

#3, 11 & 26 Central Connector &
Information Broker

Roles in Your Network

- Draw your network of main contacts
 - Draw connections among your connections as accurately as possible
 - If you want, show stronger connections (e.g., connections for many purposes) with thicker lines
- What role do you play in the network?
- Are there enough central connectors, information brokers, boundary spanners and peripheral specialists? Are they connected to the right people?
- What insights can you draw about how well your social capital can be leveraged for speed?

Network Structures for Speed

- What configurations of connections are most important for speed?
- Dimensions of network structures
 - Density of ties: average number of connections per person in the network (high density = lots of connections)
 - Strength of ties: strong, multidimensional, long-term relationship = strong tie

Network Structures for Speed

- Safety Net
 - Softens the negative impact of actions, allows you to act and learn
 - Ties must be strong and dense
- Fishing Net
 - Catches the right information and resources before they flow past
 - Density as low as possible – catch what you need; neither more than you need, nor anything you do *not* need
 - Ties can be weak compared to safety net

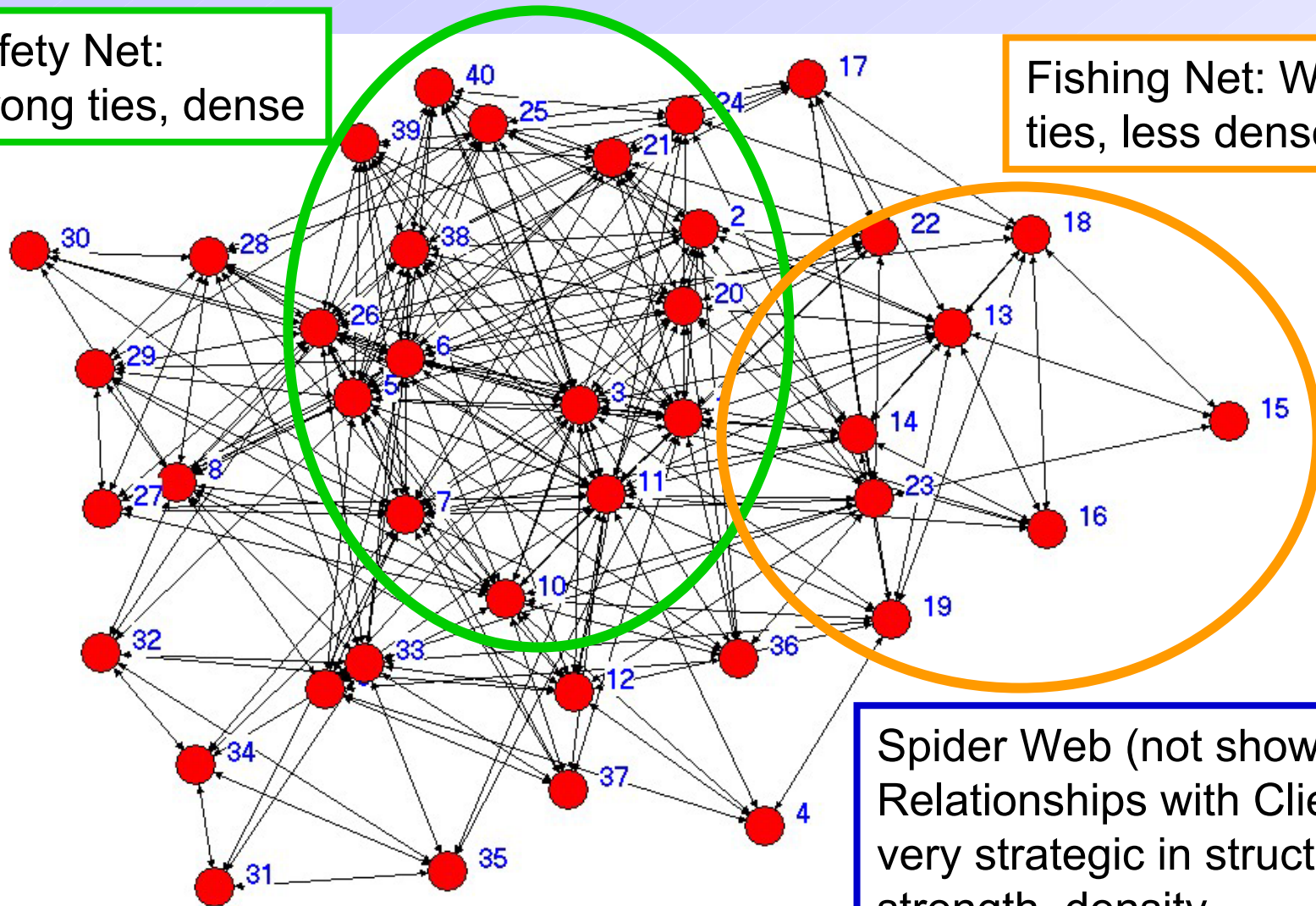
Network Structures for Speed

- Spider Web
 - Different kinds of ties for different tasks, all connected
 - Strategic structure
 - Multiple paths to same place, but not too many paths
 - Careful balance between strength (as high as possible) and density (as low as possible) by creating right structure
 - Spider learns to read network – by sensing vibrations knows the significance of information impact

Internal Advice Network – Once per Month or More

Safety Net:
Strong ties, dense

Fishing Net: Weaker
ties, less dense



Spider Web (not shown):
Relationships with Client are
very strategic in structure,
strength, density.

Your Network Structure

- Examine your network structure – both what is shown and what you were not able to draw
- Where in your network is the
 - Safety net?
 - Fishing net?
 - Spider web?
- Are you a fast spider?
- How could you improve your network for speed?

The Paradox of Networking

- ✓ If we create networks with the sole intention of getting something, we will not succeed
- ✓ The benefits follow from investments in **meaningful** activities and relationships
- ✓ “The great paradox is that by contributing to others, you are helped in return, often far in excess of what anyone would expect or predict”
(Wayne Baker, Achieving Success through Social Capital, p. 24)