

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/building-a-network>

Frederic Kerrest, executive vice chairman and co-founder of Okta, encourages students to build a network of mentors and peers, and gives tips on how to ask for help and advice.



## Transcript

- I would say mentors and peers.. Okay.. 00:00:04,950 That is something people do not do enough of.. Even some of the best leaders I've ever hired and worked with, I say, "Okay, well what is your peer network saying?" And a lot of times I'll get blank stares and I'll be like, "Okay, hey, over the next three or six months, I want you to proactively go out and find a set of peers.. We'll talk about it six months later." "Yeah.. I didn't." And so, you know, when you will all have amazing networks, but also like when you go out into the world, you can reach out to people on LinkedIn and say, "Hey".. And here's a big tip, a big tip is don't start with this is what I want.. Start with, "How can I help you?" Or end every conversation with, "What can I do to help you?" or propose an idea so if you know any of you reach out to me and you're gonna say, "Well, I have these nine questions".. I'll be like, okay, "That's great." If one of you reaches out and says, "Hey, you know what? I saw that you're doing this and I have these three ideas, or these two people you could talk to I thought might be helpful.. Also, I have a couple questions." I'm like, "Oh, that's definitely one I'm gonna"..

So that's true for peers and for mentors.. I just wanna be really clear.. And having a peer network is key because like, I know there's a lot of information out on the internet now, but just being able to talk to people and go and have lunch, say, you know, "Here's what I'm seeing in inside sales." "Here's what I'm doing in outside sales." "Here's what we're doing in Asia." "Oh, we just decided to do this in Japan." You know, whatever.. "Oh, we're having problems getting in." "We got FedRAMP High certification in the government it really helped me with DOD deals." Like whatever it is, you're gonna be able to just.. I asked my men-, I'm pretty, I'll be pretty aggressive about asking all sorts of questions.. Everything from like, you know, personnel, you know, personnel challenges to cultural challenges to personal questions, to like, you know, now more and more of my mentors, their kids have started to go off to college or whatever.. And it's like, okay, well how did you manage, you know, through teen, I mean, whatever, all sorts of things.. I mean, it's all part and parcel, right? So, separating out your professional and personal life, the more you can like, get comfortable and get people who can be comfortable answering that, I think the better off you'll be in like the whole, the wholesome picture...