

# Bridge Club

## Building & Utilising Networks

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*Networking specialists for early stage business*



BridgeClub



# Who are we?

- **Bridge Club is a networking specialist supporting early stage business.**
- **We create opportunities for you to meet people and make connections.**
- **Our “*In Conversation With...*” format offers information and inspiration to a business audience.**
- **Our ‘little black book’ helps you access key people - clients, partners, suppliers, mentors, etc**



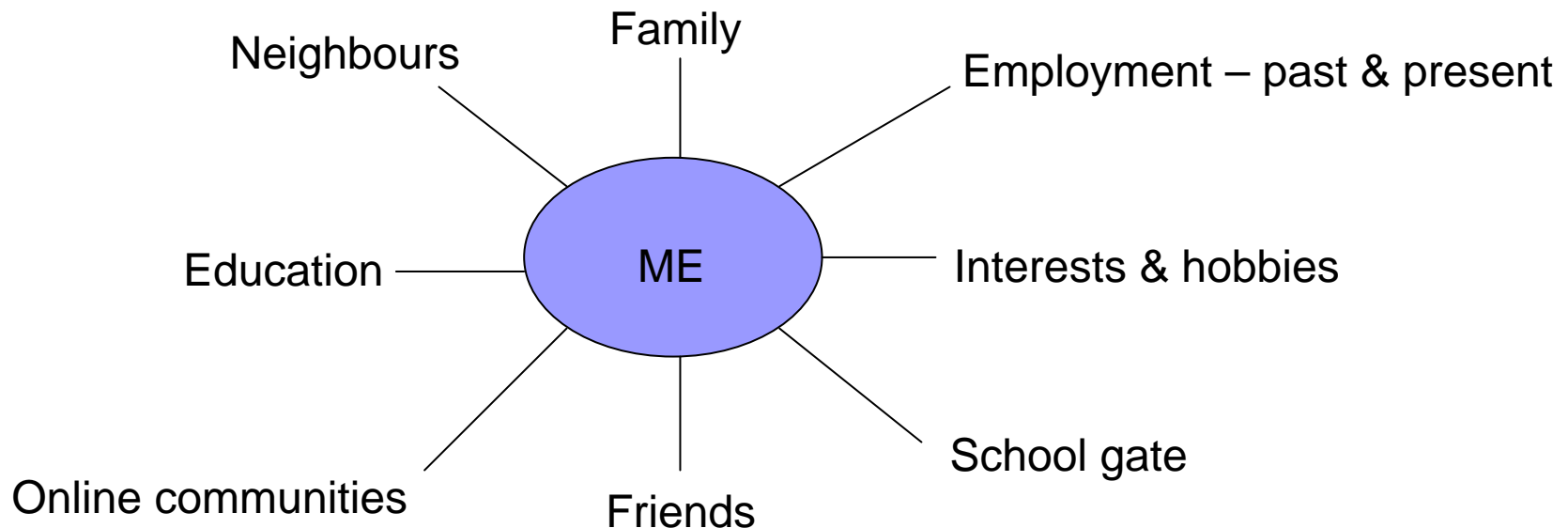
# What is a network?

- An interconnected group of people with a method of sharing information between the individuals, either virtually or physically.
- Fundamentally, a network is all those people with whom you have a relationship.
- A *group* of people becomes a *network*, when you utilise the people in that group to your advantage, and can offer something in turn.



# What is my network?

1. **Personal** - everyone you know: 40 - 400 people
2. **Accessible** – everyone they know: 1,600 – 160,000
3. **Developed** – everyone you could know: 64,000 – 64,000,000

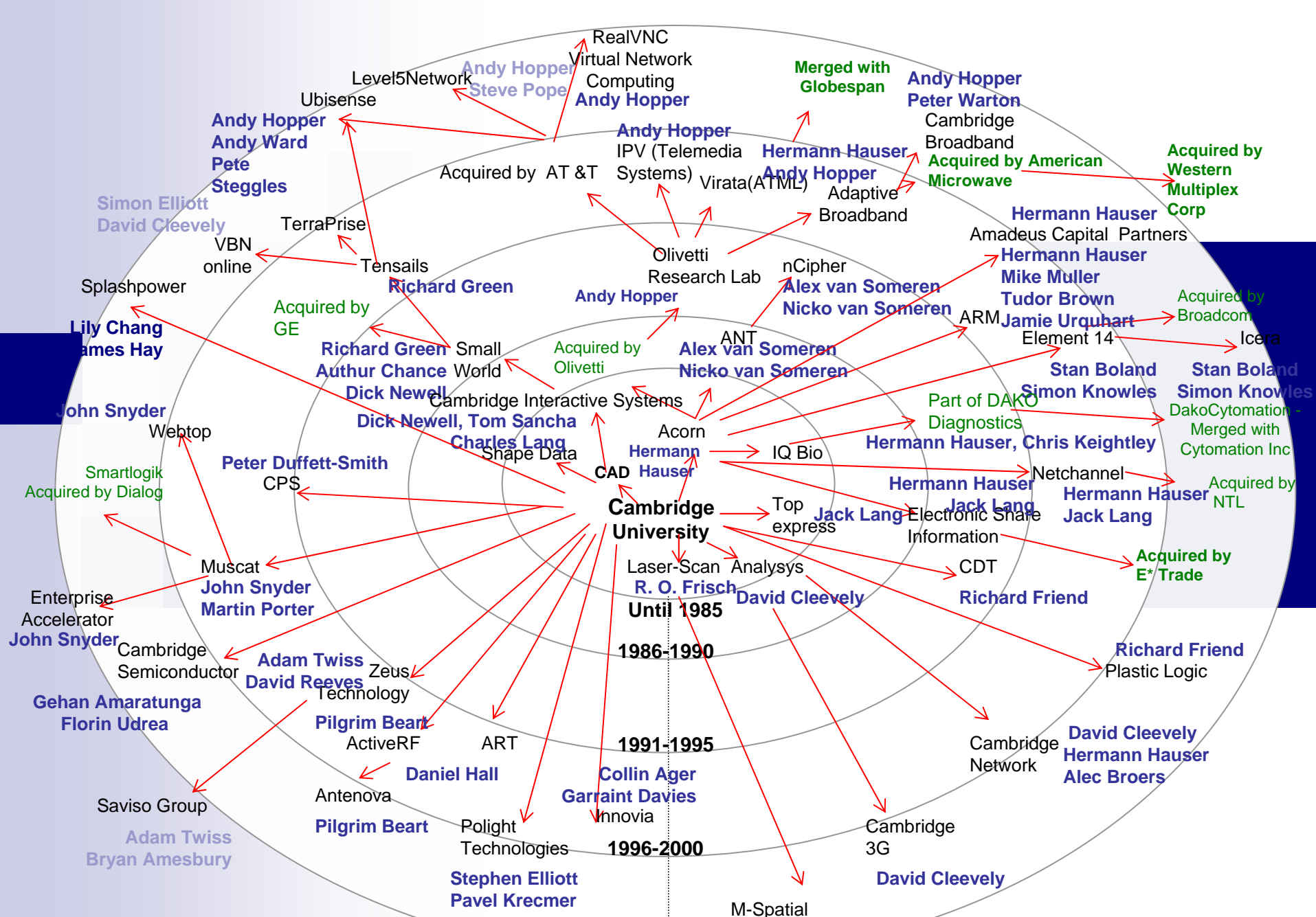




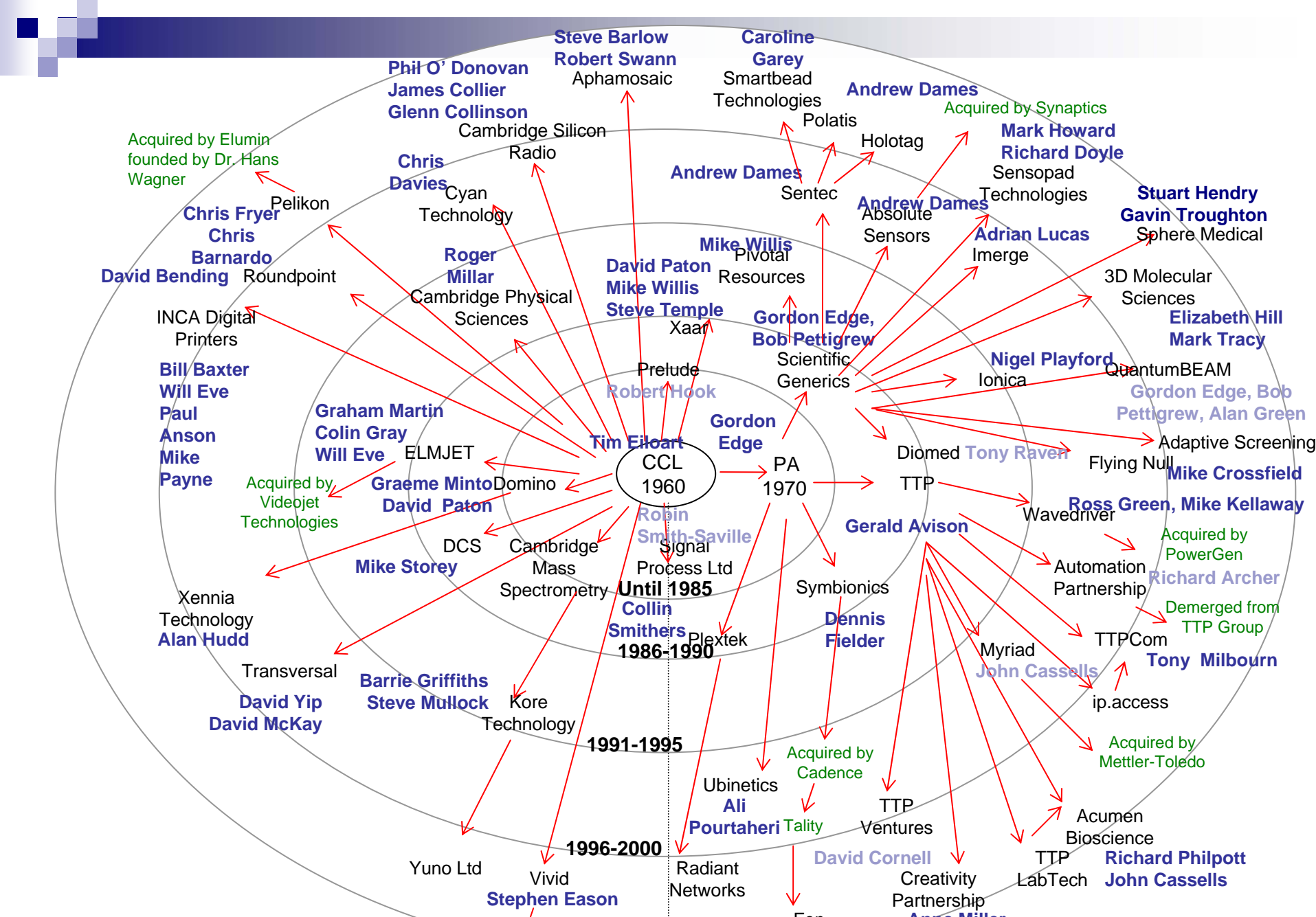
# How does a network grow?

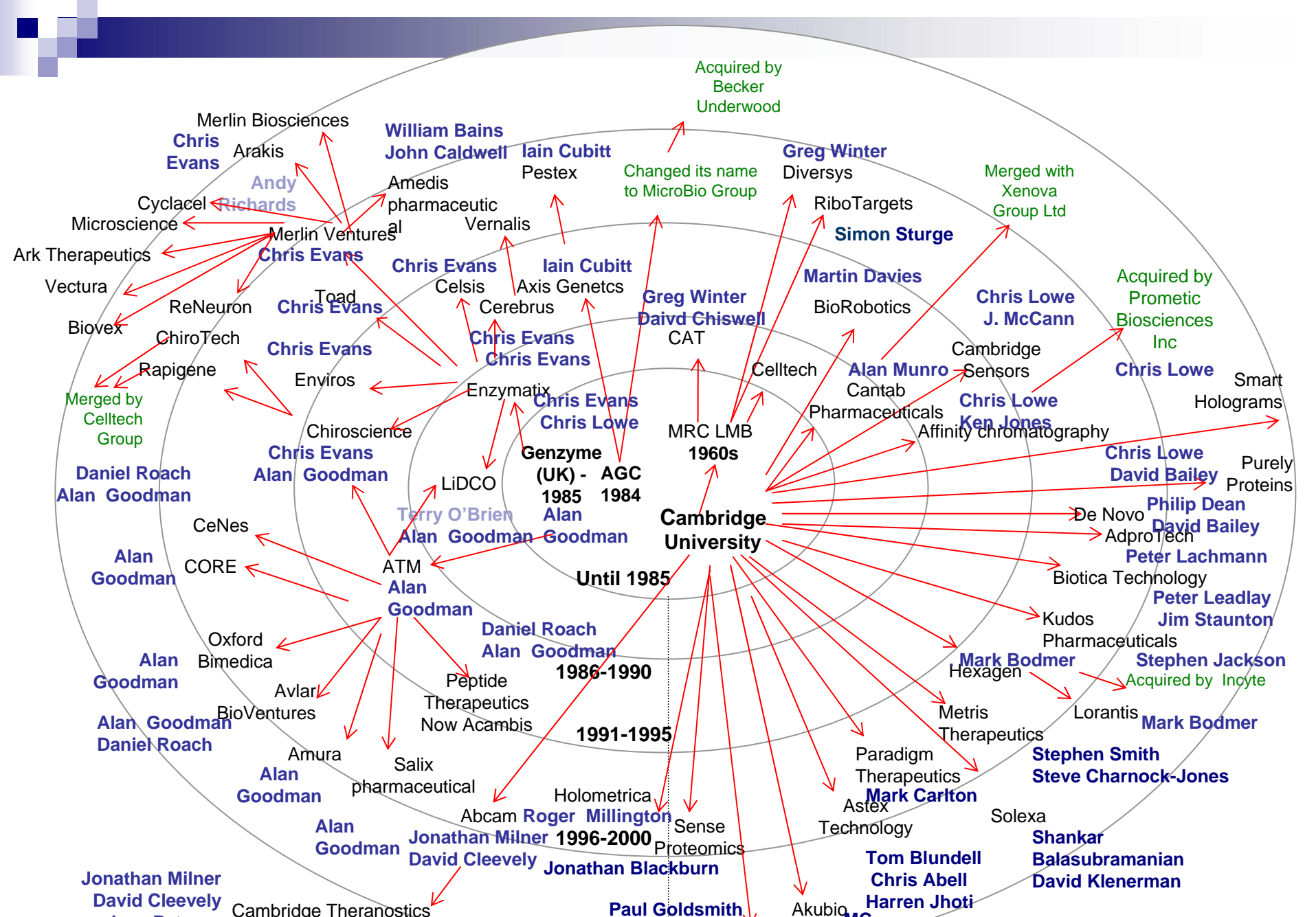
The next few slides demonstrate how a network grows

- a) The hi-tech start-ups associated with the Cambridge University
- b) The hi-tech start-ups spawned from the Cambridge Consultants
- c) The biotech start-ups from Cambridge University and other individuals
- c) A social network



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# Mapping your own network

1. Place yourself in the centre.
2. Identify a number of 'hubs' or sources of contacts, e.g. your job, your family, your hobby.
3. Identify key players in each of these hubs.
4. Link the individuals within and between the different hubs.



# What use is network mapping?

- Identify gaps/weak spots, which need working on.
- Identify the links between your contacts.
- Identify ‘gatekeepers’ who are very well connected.
- Take a pro-active approach to strengthening your network.
- Remind yourself of who you know and how your relationship with them could be beneficial.
- Spot ‘hubs’ which could prove invaluable for you to be part of.



# What is networking...for you?

- Mutually-beneficial
- Long-term relationships
- Way to brainstorm ideas
- 'Safe' environment
- Support group
- Reality checker
- Inspirational
- Motivational
- Confidence building
- Way of life



# What is networking...for your business?

- Marketing tool
- Social capital
- Business 'know who' tool
- Route to market
- Opportunity identifier
- Learn from other people's mistakes



# If the cap fits...

Networking comes in all shapes and sizes: we are all individuals and so need to find our own, most effective style:

- Referral focussed – sales, sales, sales
- Speed networking – quantity over quality
- Informal – as a by-product of another event or occasion
- Facilitated – tailored help from a host
- Online – business and social

Try to experience a few different styles of networking – get out of your comfort zone!



# Online networking

- Routed in social networking
- Can provide a 'soft landing' for networking virgins
- Allows quick and convenient communications
- Costs very little, if anything to participate
- Contacts are practically infinite
- Allows users to share documents, images, etc

BUT

- Is hard to identify genuine networkers from time wasters
- There's no substitute for face-to-face interaction
- Can be de-valued or mis-used due to *social* online networking norms
- Is very public



# Cyberspace or face-to-face?

1. Who is part of a physical network, if so which ones?
2. Who here is part of an online network? If so, which ones?
3. What are the pro's and con's of each networking opportunity?
4. What gaps have you identified in how you network and how could these be filled?



# Why network?

- One word-of-mouth referral is 80 times more effective than a cold call
- Most people know approx. 250 people, who know 250 people, etc, etc
- A 'foot in the door' for employment or a contract
- The chance to demonstrate your skills and abilities in a more natural setting, allowing your personality to take preference over your business plan
- A great way to learn about yourself and others
- A good way to build your confidence, understand the local business 'map' and learn about business etiquette



# Getting it right

## DO

- Be energetic
- Be positive
- Show an interest
- Ask questions
- Listen & learn
- Build a rapport
- Be patient
- Be generous with your contacts
- Have an open mind
- Find common ground
- Be yourself

## DON'T

- Disregard anybody
- Replace words with business cards
- Assume a hierarchy
- Talk too much
- Force a sale
- Ask inappropriate questions
- Drink too much<sup>1</sup>

**Remember: PEOPLE DO  
BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE – LET  
PEOPLE MEET THE REAL YOU!**



# How to find out more

- [www.bridgeclubnorth.com](http://www.bridgeclubnorth.com)
- Chambers of Commerce or JCI
- IoD or Young Directors' Forum
- Universities, current employers, trade associations
- Journals & industry press
- Colleagues, friends & family
- [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), [www.bebo.com](http://www.bebo.com), [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com), etc

Try it, you might like it!...



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