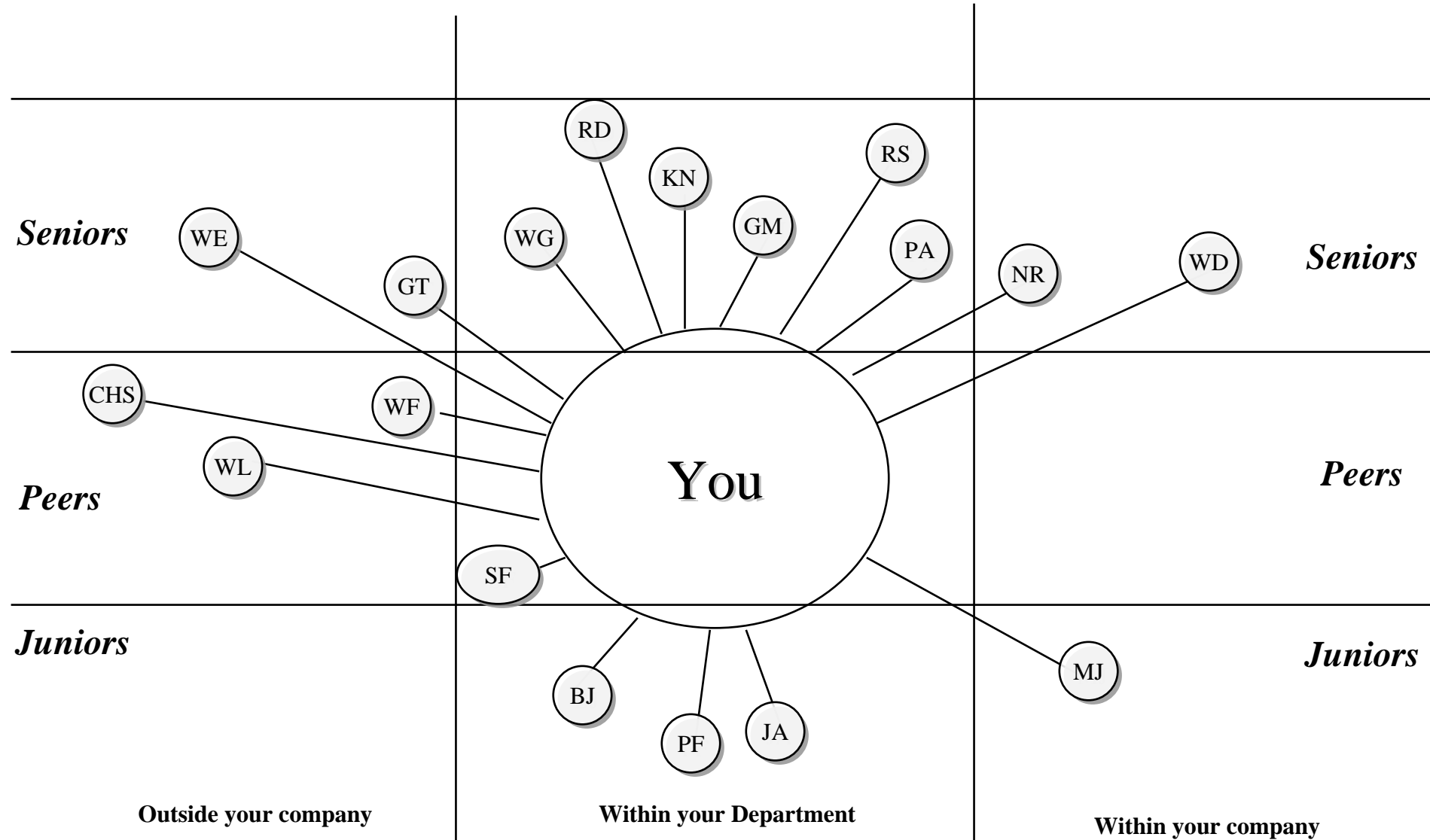# Beyond Mentoring: Building A Developmental Network

Professor David A. Thomas

Harvard Business School

3 Career Currencies

- Human capital
- Intellectual capital
- **Social capital: your network**
  - **Relationships**
  - **Reputation**
  - **Resource access**

NETWORK MAP: JOHN J.

Seniors

Seniors

Peers

Peers

Juniors

Juniors

RD

RS

KN

GM

WE

WG

PA

WD

GT

NR

CHS

WF

You

WL

SF

MJ

BJ

PF

JA

Definition of Network

- The set of relationships critical to your ability to get things done, and develop professionally according to your goals

3 Network Building Steps

- Network Diagnosis
  - identify patterns and preferences
  - assess gaps, given your goals
- Network Alignment
  - with goals and constraints
- Network Maintenance
  - continuous development

Question

- What are your professional/career goals?
  - 1 year
  - 5 years
- What is required to achieve these goals?
- What could impede your ability to reach them?

Mapping Your Network

- List those people:
  - Who are important sources of information, help and advice pertaining to your current job at XYZ?
  - Who have contributed to your professional development in the last couple of years and remain sources of career development advice or assistance for you today?
  - Who are important sources of social support, for example people with whom you share important work-related experiences and dilemmas and have a relationship characterized by mutual trust?

3 Characteristics of Effective Networks

- Types of contacts: Breadth

- Types of relationships: Depth

- Types of networks: Leverage

Characteristic 1: Breadth

- Range and type of contacts:
  - seniors, peers, juniors
  - outside your group, specialty, office, firm, and industry
  - mix of your own and other "identity" groups, e.g., gender, race, nationality

Assessing Network Breadth

- Using your network map, consider:
  - what groups are represented in your network?
  - in what sectors do you have significant gaps?
  - what key people or groups are missing?

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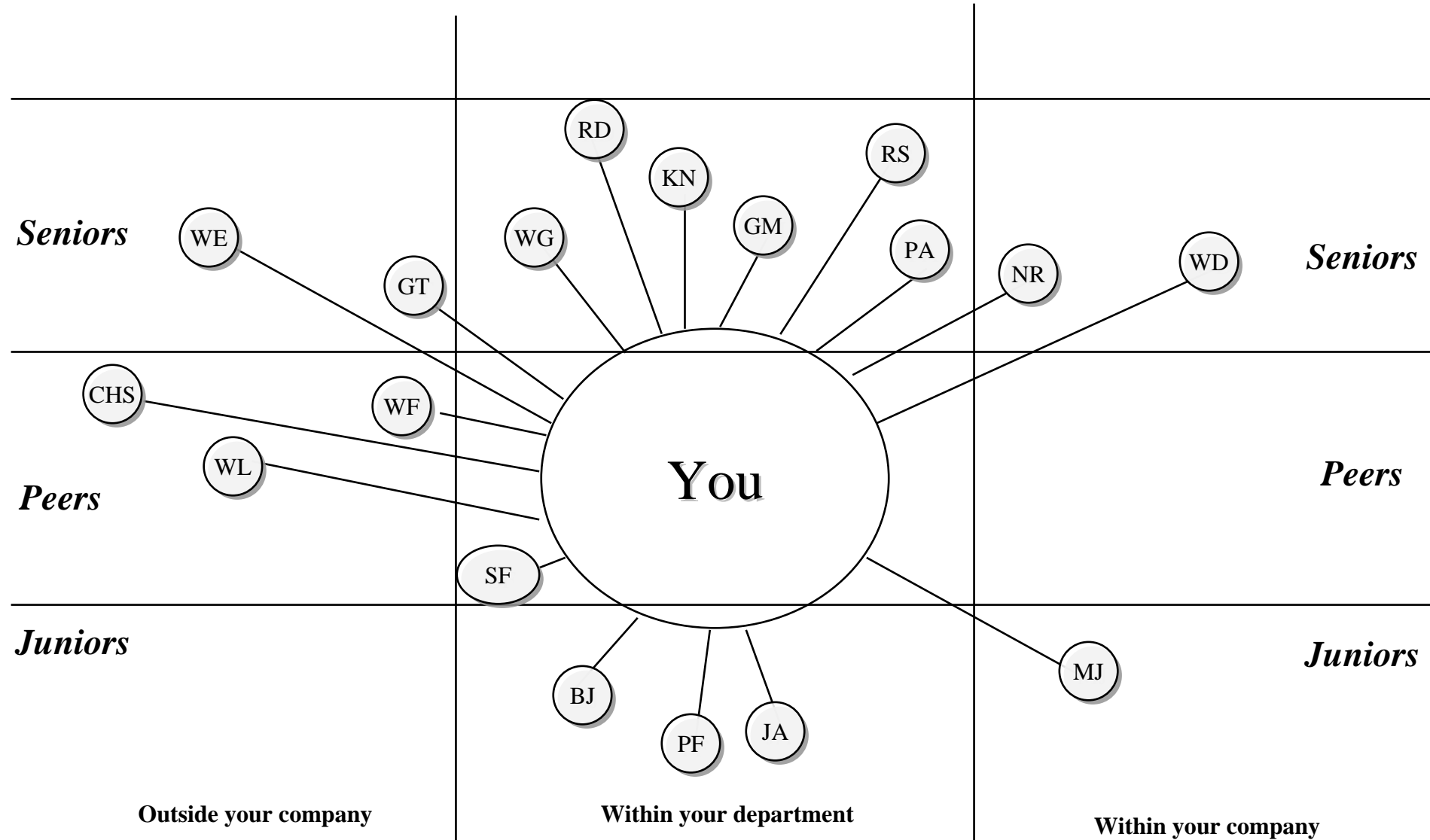
Characteristic 2: Depth

- "Strong" and "weak" connections
- Developmental vs. Instrumental
- Types of developmental relationships
  - sponsor-protégé
  - mentor-protégé
  - special peers
  - reverse mentors

Developmental Functions

Career

- Advocacy
- Coaching
- Exposure and Visibility
- Protection
- Challenging Assignments

Psychosocial

- Role modeling
- Counseling
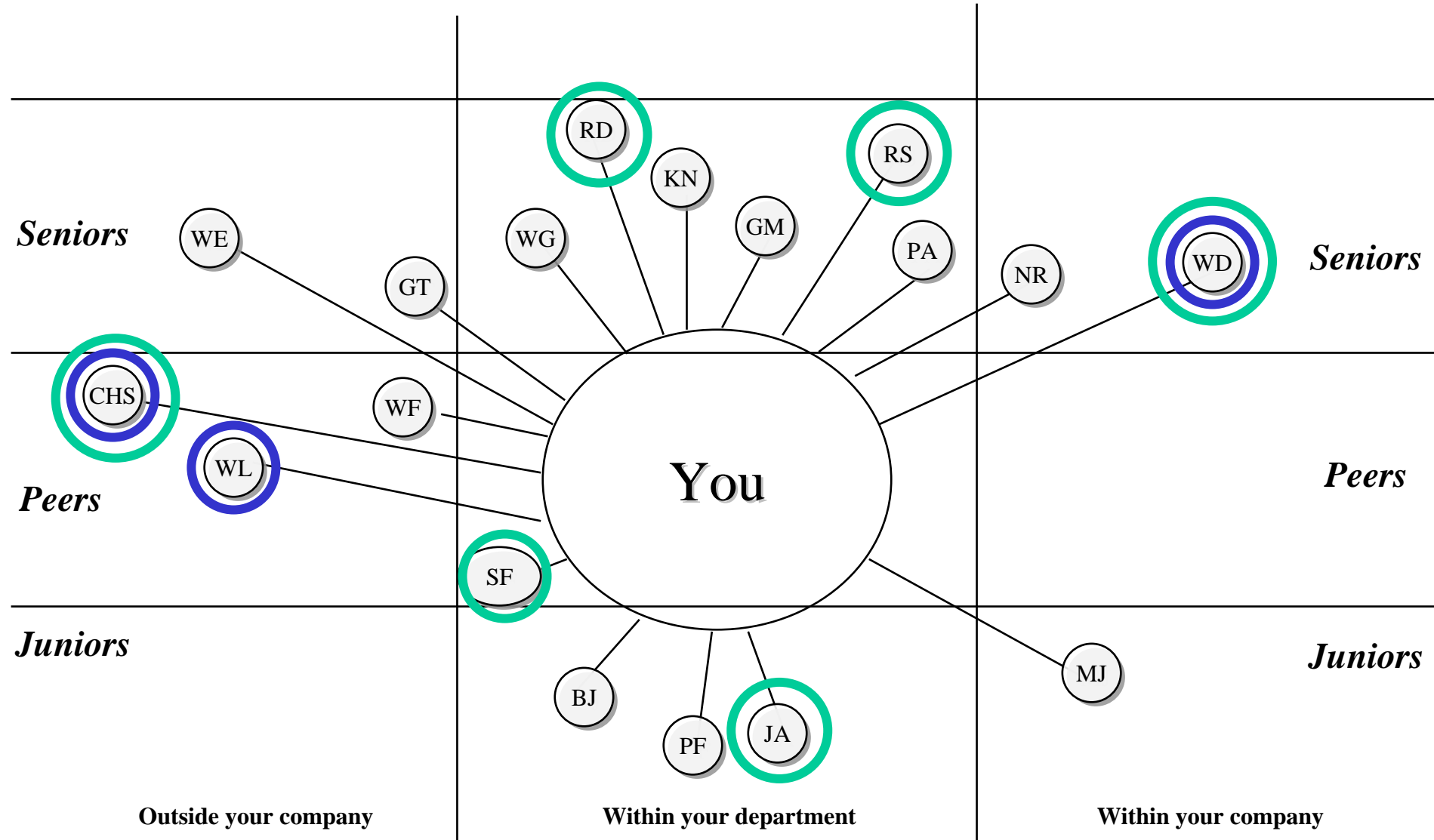- Acceptance and confirmation
- Friendship
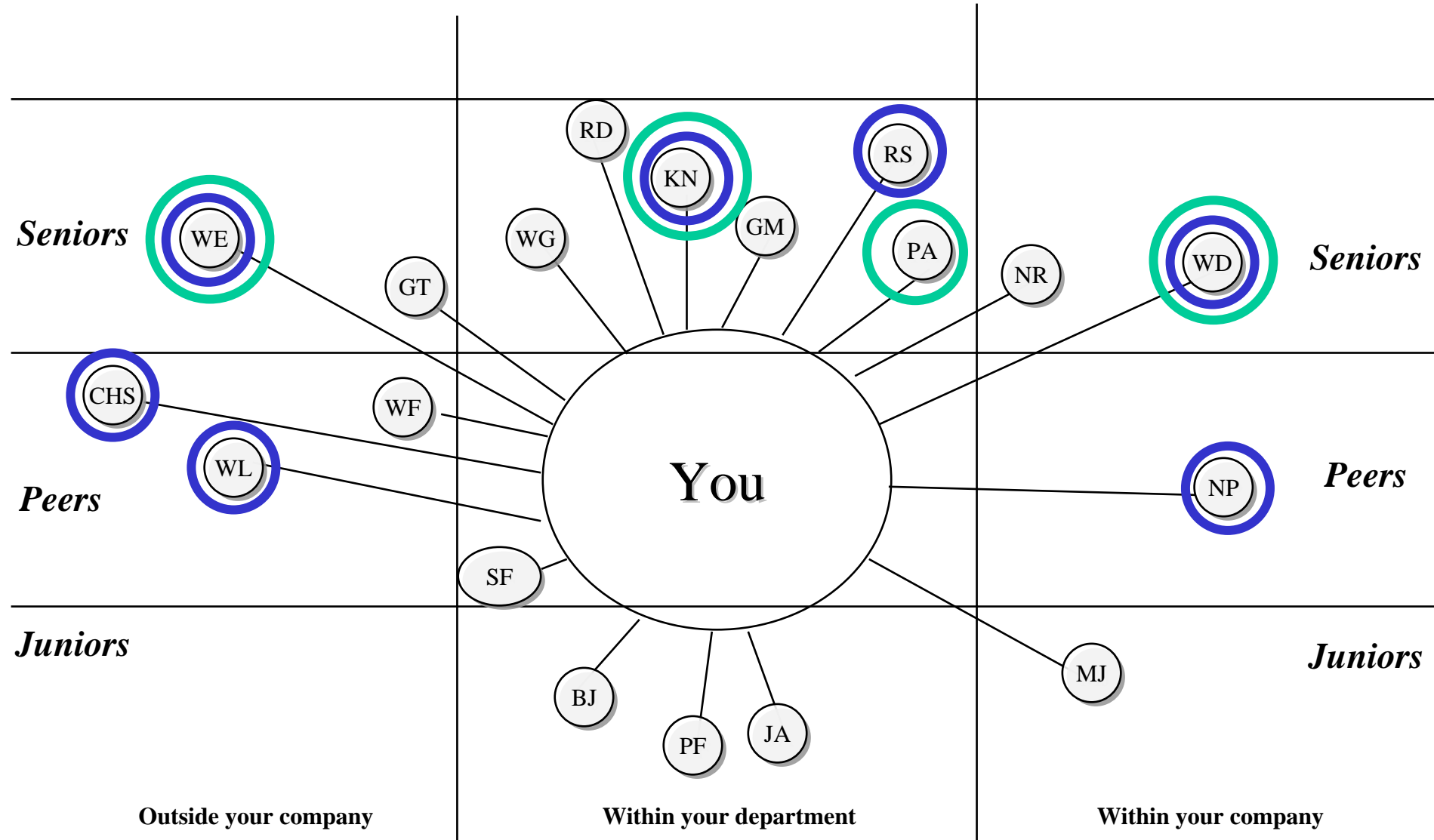
NETWORK MAP: JOHN J.

career

psychosocial

Seniors

Seniors

Peers

Peers

Juniors

Juniors

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Outside your company

Within your department

Within your company

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

NETWORK MAP: JOHN J.

- career
- psychosocial

Seniors — Outside your company

- WE
- GT
- CHS
- WF
- WL

Within your department

- RD
- KN
- WG
- GM
- PA
- RS

Within your company

- NR
- WD — Seniors
- NP — Peers

You

- SF
- BJ
- PF
- JA
- MJ

Peers (Outside your company)

Juniors (Outside your company)

Juniors (Within your company)

Outside your company | Within your department | Within your company

Assessing Network Depth

- How many people did you list in response to all three network questions?

- Among those you listed, is there one or more persons you would consider to be a developer of yours, mentor, sponsor or special peer?

- How would you assess the developmental quality of your relationships in terms of the career and psychosocial functions listed on the previous page?

Characteristic 3: Leverage

- Types of Networks
  - -redundant vs. non-redundant
- Value-add as a function of the number of sectors (people) you can reach and connect:
  - industry contacts, professional associations
  - identity based networks
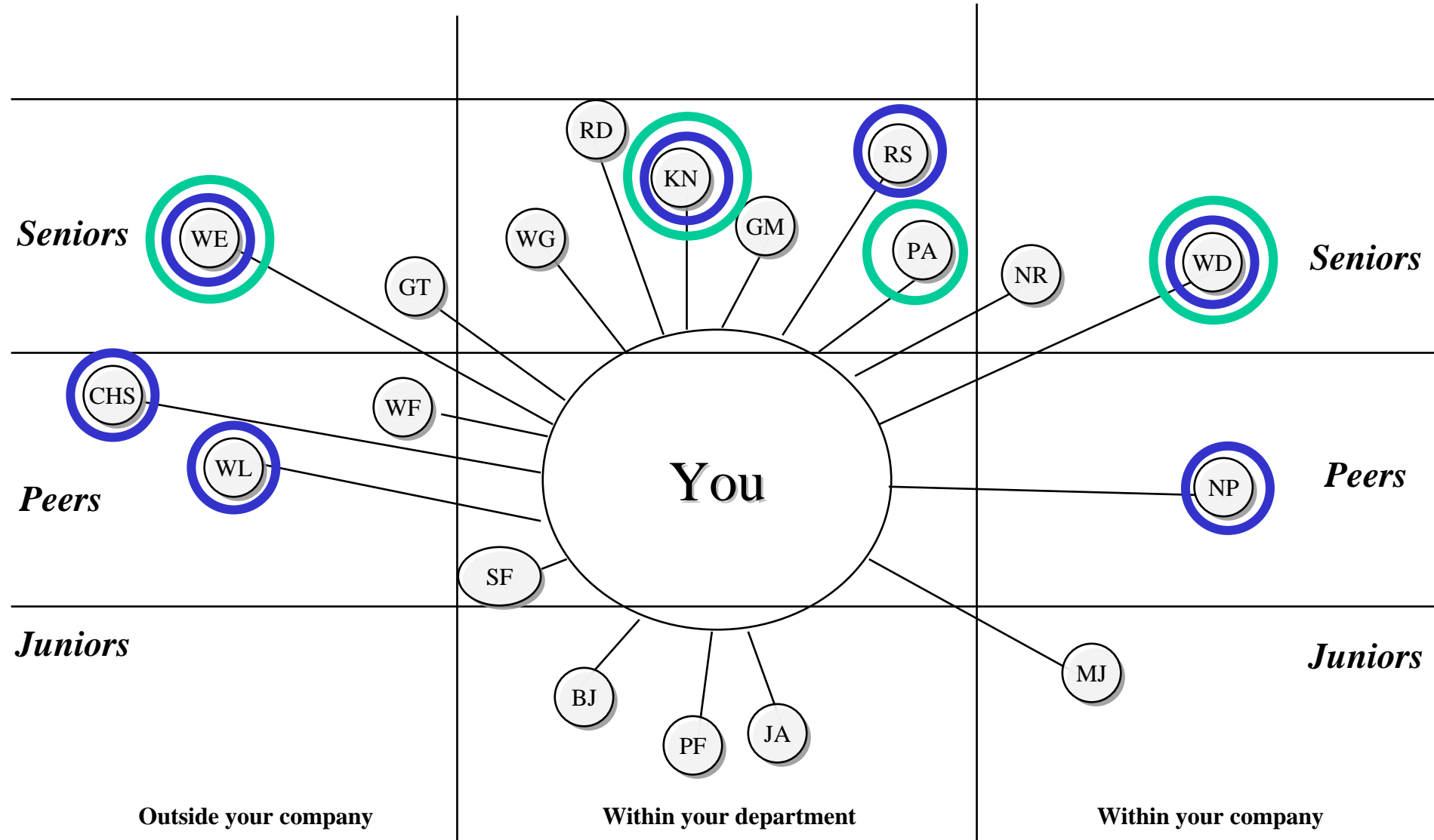 - private, public, non-profit sectors
  - community groups

NETWORK MAP: JOHN J.

career

psychosocial

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Assessing Leverage

- How many people outside your primary organization did you list?

- Is your network one in which most people know each other? A you a member of multiple different unconnected circles?

- How industry/profession specific is it?

- How many different groups (defined by common interests and experience) are represented?

Diagnosing Your Network

- Based on your assessment of your network map:
  - what groups are over- or under-represented?
  - what key people and groups are missing?
  - whom are you over-reliant upon?
  - what ties should you strengthen? what network ties are underutilized?
  - what circles could/should you connect?

Questions to consider

1. What is your network most useful for?
    a. helping you do your job effectively
    b. helping you identify and achieve career goals
    c. providing social support

2. What is the most significant challenge you face in developing a more effective network of relationships?

3. Has your network of relationships changed in the last five years?

Network Tactics

- Manage yourself
  - understand your current approach and assumptions about networking
  - find a style that fits you
  - be realistic: trust and credibility take time
  - hold yourself accountable
  - expand your ideas about who you can learn from

Network Tactics

- Manage your **activities**
  - follow-up on overtures from others
  - set aside time for activities that broaden your network
  - do the "trite stuff"
    - be prepared, do your homework
    - write thank-you notes, forward clippings
  - use a system to get organized

Network Tactics

- ## Manage your **connections**
  - Improve the quality of current relationships
  - use your "strong ties" to help you break into new circles or to strengthen "weak" ties
  - create links across sectors of your network by making referrals
  - help your people develop their networks
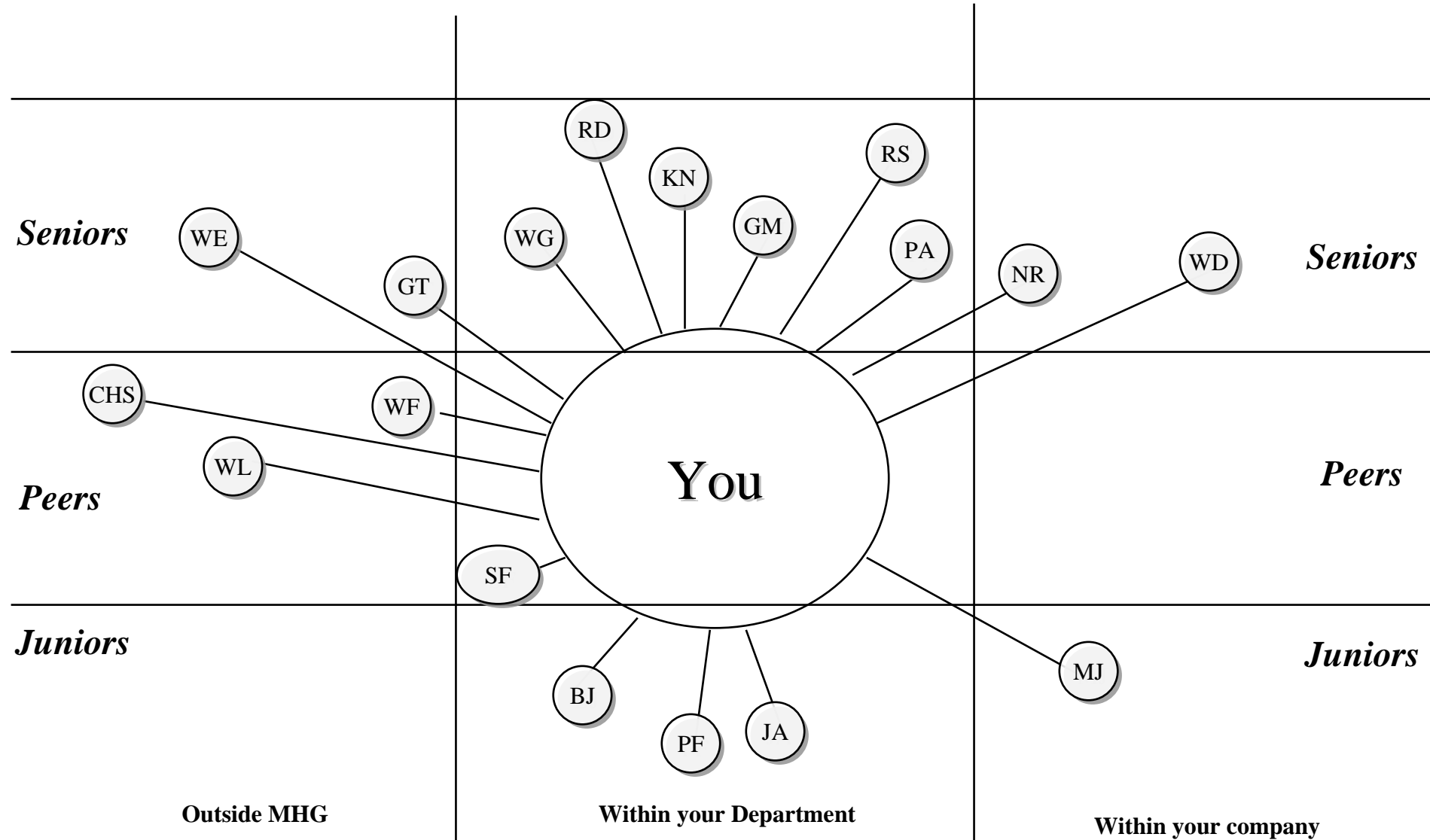 - take advantage of things you already do

Strategies for Improving your Network

- Be **Proactive**:
  - Periodically assess your network in light of your goals
  - all encounters are opportunities for expanding and diversifying your network
  - build relationships before you need them
- Be **Pragmatic**:
  - analyze potential contacts' interests and concerns, know what they value
- Follow the Law of **Reciprocity**:
  - give back to the network

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Initiating and Cultivating Developmental Relationships

- Self assessment is key. What do you need to reach your goals?
- Identify individuals who might prove to be valuable and provide the support you need.
- Cultivate relationships ahead of time (follow-up on overtures).
- Be sensitive to the relationship's state of development.
- Give the benefit of the doubt to the other person.
- Don't rely on chemistry. Build the relationship.

Initiating and Cultivating Developmental Relationships

- Become aware of what you bring to the relationship (benefits and baggage): take risks.

- Find ways to work with potential mentors and sponsors.

- Look beyond the boundaries of your department/school.

- Don't limit yourself to the stars.

- Grow current relationships.

- Always remember performance and track record matter.

Building a Useful Network

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