Who is in Your "Inner Circle?"

From “A Smarter Way to Network” by Rob Cross and Robert Thomas:

The most successful, satisfied leaders have built up strong networks in each of the following six areas. Look at each of the areas and then list at least 5 people who play this role in your life.

1. People who offer new information or expertise, including internal/external clients who increase market awareness; peers in other functions, divisions or geographies who share best practices, and contacts in other industries who inspire innovation. **Who plays this role in your life?**

2. Formally powerful people who provide mentoring, sense-making, political support and resources; and informally powerful people who offer influence, help coordinating projects and support among the “rank and file.” **Who plays this role in your life?**

3. People who give developmental feedback, challenge your decisions and push you to be better. **Who plays this role in your life?**
4. People who provide personal support such as colleagues who help you get back on track when you’re having a bad day or friends with whom you can just relax and be yourself. *Who plays this role in your life?*

5. People who add a sense of purpose or worth, such as bosses and customers who validate your work, and family members and others who show you your work has a broader meaning. *Who plays this role in your life?*

6. People who promote work/life balance, holding you accountable for activities that improve your physical health, mental engagement or spiritual well-being. *Who plays this role in your life?*

**Reflecting On Your Inner Circle**

- What are your thoughts on the 6 different categories? Do you think that these make sense for your personal/professional development?
- Did you have at least 5 people you could list for each role?
- Did you have the same people repeatedly serving multiple roles? Do you think this is a good or a bad thing for your development and growth?
- In what area do you feel like you have the strongest connections? In what area do you feel you have the weakest connections?
- Do you think the people you listed would include you on their list? Why/why not?
- Do you have a good balance of connections that you’ve made on behalf of your employer and connections that may only benefit you?
- What have you done in the last week to build or deepen your connections with the key people on your list?
Developing Your Inner Circle

1. **Strengthen the beneficial relationships.**
   - With whom do you have the most beneficial interactions and relationships?
   - With whom do you have the most energizing relationships?
   - What can you do to strengthen these relationships?

2. **Weed out the negative relationships.**
   - Who saps your energy or promotes unhealthy behaviors?
   - How can you:
     - Re-shape your role to avoid them?
     - Devote less time to being with them?
     - Work to change their behavior?
     - Reframe your reactions so you don’t dwell on them?
3. **Where do you need to build new relationships?**
   - Looking at each category of relationship above, where do you see holes or gaps? Where do you need to find new people or different kinds of people?
   - Considering your personal/professional goals, which new people or new categories of people do you need to develop relationships with?
   - How could you go about meeting these people and building relationships with them?

4. **Is your network too inbred?** Are you connected to people from different occupations, industries, walks of life? How could you benefit from diversifying your network? In what ways do you want to diversity your network?