

Networking

Establishing and maintaining a professional network can help you progress on your professional path more quickly and efficiently. Building this network may seem daunting, but you are probably further along than you realize.

What is networking?

Networking is interacting with others to develop professional contacts. By building and maintaining long-term relationships with professionals in various fields, you can both provide advice, information and support to each other.

Getting started

Almost all of us already have a network and 'do' networking, we just don't call it that. Your current network may include family, friends, neighbours, coworkers, instructors and classmates.

- From the people you already know, identify who works for a company/industry you find interesting. Chat with them about their job.
- Get out and meet people. Talk to people you don't know at social events, or join a club that relates to a personal hobby/interest.
- Understand how to maintain a [professional online presence](#), then connect with people on the internet.
- Talk to friends of friends. Do some prior research about their work and jot down some talking points/questions before connecting.
- Attend a meeting, conference, event or trade show in your field. To get the most out of it, read our [Job Fairs and Events](#) tips.
- Conduct an [informational interview](#) or schedule a quick coffee or lunch to connect with someone one-on-one.
- Become a member of a professional organization, or volunteer at one of their events.

Tip: Try not to rule anyone out. Even people who don't share the same professional interests as you can still be valuable connections and resources.

Tips for good networking

- 1 Have an elevator pitch ready. An elevator pitch is a brief introduction (30 seconds) during which you explain who you are, your education/experience, your skills/strengths and your targets for the future.
- 2 Research the event you are attending and/or people you want to network with beforehand to prepare talking points. Give conversations your full attention, avoid interruption, stay curious and ask thoughtful questions.
- 3 Aim for quality over quantity. Networking is about building meaningful relationships with people.
- 4 When you meet someone new, ask them if they would like to stay in touch and exchange contact information.
- 5 Stay connected with the people in your network. Send a link to a business site, blog, article or book review. Ask them out to coffee, lunch or an event. And, introduce people from your network to others in your network that could benefit one another.
- 6 Don't be one-sided. You can't expect constant help from your network if you give nothing in return. Offer help when you can.
- 7 Thank your contacts with a quick email or phone call whenever they help you out.

Utilizing your network

Knowing about a group, department or organization 'from the inside' helps target better, less well known opportunities. This is where your network comes in.

- Let your established network contacts know you are looking for opportunities and would appreciate leads or contacts. Email a thank you and share the results from leads or suggestions they provided. Keep them updated with your job search.
- Make it easy to help. Ask for advice, introductions, suggestions, or industry feedback on your resume rather than if they know of jobs.
- Consider whether anyone from your network could be a reference. For advice on building a reference list, read our [References](#) tips.

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