

CAREER FORWARD

**NETWORKING
OPENS DOORS**



NETWORKING OPENS DOORS

Who you know matters. The professional contacts you have may lead to expanded career options and opportunities, so cultivate a strong network. But *how* you network also matters—because your network, after all, is made up of relationships that you want to protect and promote, not alienate.



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First things first: What is a network?

A network is an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and career advancement.

THE BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

Networking has been and continues to be the number one job search strategy. Networking is your investment into you. As you prepare, determine what you would like to achieve from networking. Your primary goal is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads.

There are many other benefits to networking and some include:

- Getting hired! 4 in 10 job seekers say they found their job through personal connections
- Visibility within your field

- Positioning yourself as a thought leader in your field
- Professional development
- Promotions and salary growth
- Visibility into new vendors and suppliers
- Job satisfaction
- Acquiring suitable mentors

GETTING STARTED

Develop your 60-second presentation

Know yourself, your skills, experiences, and education. A successful introductory networking conversation/meeting will include:

- Introduction
- Self-overview
- Q&A
- Obtaining referrals/closing

Identify your key contacts

Start with the handful of contacts in your core professional and social circles and track backwards. How and where did you meet each of them? Who introduced you to them? Who helped you to get your current and previous job? Those connectors serve as your network brokers and could possibly help you to expand your network even further.

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Best networking methods

Now that you have developed your personal 60-second presentation and have identified your connections and network brokers, you are ready to begin.

The best way to connect with your networking targets

Think outside of the box. Connect virtually or in person. Connect individually or in group-settings.

Nowadays, there are so many ways to network that are more authentic and more enjoyable than the traditional, stuffy methods we have practiced for years.

- Start a new online group centered on a particular topic that will attract members.
- Host a brainstorming or idea exchange session.
- Start an industry-specific blog.
- Join professional groups and interact with other members.
- Author and share content and make yourself the center of your own network.
- Attend webinars hosted by your vendor partners.
- Get involved in a local charity. Volunteering presents a great opportunity to meet other professionals and exchange ideas as well as gain referrals and leads.
- Organize or lead a community effort. Maybe your neighborhood committee needs to raise funds for a particular item or bring awareness to an ongoing effort. By connecting with like-minded neighbors you'll be able to expand your base.
- Use your favorite hobby or weekend team activity as a way to build your network.
- Start conversations. You never know where your most valuable connections will come from—perhaps the local coffee shop, restaurant, or library. The checkout line at the grocery or hardware store may also provide you with unexpected connections.

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Networking questions

Once you have identified whom you will reach out to and the ways in which you will connect with your network, you must now focus on how you will get the information that you want. What questions will you ask? The following list provides examples of great questions to ask during a networking conversation.

Specific to career or field

- What do you like most or least about your work?
- How did you get into that field or company?
- What are you hoping to achieve next?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
- With whom would you recommend I speak?

Specific to networking event

- How did you hear about this event?
- What made you decide to come here?
- Who else do you know here?
- What professional groups or associations do you belong to?
- What blogs or industry experts do you follow?

Personal focus

- Are you from this area?
- Where did you go to school?
- What do you do for fun?
- Where else do you go to network?
- What's the best book you've read lately?

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Keys to successful networking

Don't put it off

Don't wait until you're job searching to begin networking. Initiate and continue conversations with contacts as opportunities arise. Share ideas and information, and consider that your expertise could possibly help them, too. Make it your business to connect with at least one person professionally every day. Networking gets easier and better with practice, so don't give up.

Be upfront

If you are serious about a career or job change, make your intentions known early on. If you're merely exploring possibilities, make that known as well. Whatever you do, don't waste your contacts' valuable time and influence or they might not be motivated to help you in the future.

Follow leads

If you get a job lead, follow up on it immediately. Should a lead turn into an interview, or even a new job, remember to send your referring contact a thank you note. It's a professional courtesy that may help you even more down the road.

Be genuine

When connecting with a third-party referral, it's okay to drop names—mention your shared contact or the person who referred you. Take time to get to know your new contacts' background, knowledge, and expertise. Showing genuine interest in others will make them interested in you.

Explore every angle

Use the style of networking that's best for you, but get out of your comfort zone. Reach out to circles of friends, colleagues, social networks, and professional organizations alike when job searching.

Do something for someone every day

Follow Adam Rifkin's "Five Minute Favor" (if you can do something for someone that will take less than five minutes, just do it). What could be a small investment for you could be of large benefit to someone else.

Pay it forward

Introduce people who you think would benefit from knowing one another. Follow up with them in the future to find out if the connection

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was fruitful for one or both of them.

Be a friend

Replace the word “business” with “relationship.” Think of how you interact with your friends. With friends, you engage over shared interests. You share content, articles, videos, music, and emails. Do the same with information that would be of interest to those who you would like to have in your network.

Stay connected

Networking should be ongoing. Stay connected with your contacts over time and not just when you need something from them. Networking should be a part of your long-term career plan.

Remember, networking is a two-way street. Down the road, your expertise and connections can boost someone else’s career.

WHERE KELLY® COMES IN

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