

# 10 Tips for Building Your Professional Network

To grow your network, you need to constantly meet new people and nurture your existing relationships. Here are 10 tips to help you get the most from your networking activities.

## 1. Make an effort.

Networking doesn't just happen. Apply your organizing skills to your own business by [planning a schedule of events to attend](#) or other opportunities to network, along with following up and developing your new relationships.

## 2. Face-to-face networking is better than virtual.

Social media makes it easy to network, but it shouldn't be the only way you do it. Face-to-face contact is still the best way to get to know others and build strong relationships, so take advantage of any opportunity you have to network offline and interact in the real world with your contacts.

## 3. Know what you bring to the table.

Before you go to a networking event, identify the skills, experience, expertise and other value that you can offer. Take a good look at your resources and skill set to determine what you can do for others. Approach the people you meet with confidence and let your value show, rather than trying to make a sales pitch.

## 4. Make conversation.

Networking isn't about trying to exchange as many business cards as possible. It's much better to engage with just a few people than to rush around in an attempt to connect with a larger number. Make an effort to get into a real conversation with someone, even if it means you'll meet fewer people.

## 5. Go for a win-win.

Don't approach everyone with the expectation that they'll offer you work or give you referrals. Relationships that are mutually rewarding will be much stronger. Others will be more likely to do things for you when they're also benefiting from knowing you.

## 6. Stay in touch.

Staying in touch with those you meet is essential to growing business relationships. Interacting through social media, sending helpful information by email, or sending a card in the mail are all good ways to stay on the radar of the people you meet.

## 7. Follow up with an offer.

When you first follow up with new contacts, be proactive and offer some kind of help they need that you can provide in just a few minutes. Your goodwill gesture will go a long way towards boosting your relationship, and your new contact will immediately see the value you have to offer.

## 8. Keep records.

This is another area where your organizing skills will serve you well. [Create an entry in your address book](#) for each of your contacts and record any business or personal information that may come up during your conversations. This data can clue you in to their needs and ways you can make connections with them.

## 9. Maintain professionalism.

Although some of your networking contacts may ultimately become friends, remember to maintain the appropriate level of professionalism. Always correspond with them politely and don't forget to say "please" and "thank you."

## 10. Pay attention.

Pay attention and listen closely to determine whether someone views your contact as valuable or intrusive.

## Conclusion

As much as possible, make your networking relationships valuable to the other person. Don't make it all about what you need from them. If your contacts get great things by knowing you, they'll be on the lookout for ways they can reciprocate and help you too.

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