

How to network effectively for career opportunities

For many the thought of networking can invoke so many types of negative feelings, probably made worse by the fact we all know a few people that actually manage to find professional contacts on their commute home or in the queue at Starbucks, meanwhile we struggle to make conversation in professional environments. There are very simple but often overlooked ways that we can all effectively network to open new doors for ourselves.

Connect with everyone

When it comes to networking, never think that somebody isn't good enough or not worth your time, Every single person that you meet has some kind of knowledge and value that you could be looking for. Many have this idea that networking is becoming best friends with a CEO of a major company, when in reality, some of the most important contacts (and lessons you learn) can be from talking to the cleaner or bar staff – don't ever let something as minor as somebody's occupational title deter you from connecting with them.

Network for other people

If you, by whatever chance, meet somebody and your first thoughts are something along the lines of "wow this person could really help Bob from accounts", then make a point to introduce them to each other. Not only will they more than likely return the favour, what you're also enabling is a big connection of people being joined together by you and with you – which is exactly what networking is all about. Are you also longing for somebody else to throw a networking event? Why don't you get ahead of the game and organise it yourself (and make everybody bring a plus one).

Social media can be your friend

Events and face-to-face types of networking are wonderful...but only if you're completely comfortable. Social media, when utilised correctly, can absolutely help you network and find new career opportunities. LinkedIn is a great platform to get your professional image all over the social media world, but you can also share your own content on Twitter and Instagram – which can absolutely be seen by potential employers or professional contacts. Remember this works both ways, and you should always be careful about what you post on the internet.

Combine networking with your daily life

Can you volunteer for projects or events that could have the potential to put you in touch with new people? Do you have a hobby that you could possibly utilise to help you meet somebody? Using your hobbies and interests to build up your contacts can provide you with so many opportunities.

Be yourself

The most important think when it comes to networking is to be yourself, and we're completely aware that this is so cliché but it couldn't be more true. Never pretend to be something or somebody you're not to impress people...so what you're an introvert – embrace that quality and use it to connect with people. Tell people about your job, your interests and dreams, reciprocate all efforts and become a good listener. With a positive attitude and the right mindset, you'll be networking with more people – which can only mean more opportunities.