



Networking (building and cultivating relationships) is most important when thinking of starting a new business or career advancement. Networking also helps with breaking the glass ceiling. The requirements to expanding the network of support and contacts are: openness, honesty, good communication skills, genuine and positive attitude, and the ability to give and in turn be supportive.

Networking 101

The followings are basics but important points of networking:

- 1. Self-Branding** – To prepare for networking, you will need to find what you are marketing. This is called branding. When I say `Starbuck` or `Microsoft`, you will immediately vision or think of certain things, positive and/or negative. Now, if you were a product, how would you market yourself? What would you like people to see or hear when they meet you? If you suspect that you could be viewed through tinted glasses, what can you do to remove it? Ask people you know to describe you in order to examine if they see the qualities you intend to market. You can undergo the 360 Degree, an assessment that assists with self-branding. Have you heard of people `re-inventing` themselves? This is a process of rebuilding a new image, a new brand, and re-introducing people to your newly packaged potentials and image.
- 2. Always Be Prepared** – Preparedness includes mental, physical, and emotional fitness to look, talk, and present the best of you which you achieve through eating fresh and healthy, regular exercise, time to mediate and relax, surrounding yourself with positive thoughts and optimistic and positive people. Preparedness also includes up-to-date resume, a business card, and a sample of your best work. You can develop a business portfolio to display sample of your writing or best work, creative work, letters of recommendation and acknowledgement, copies of your transcripts and certificates, awards, news coverage, and other relevant information with you at all times. You can put them all on a CD for easy handling if you wish.
- 3. Stay in Touch** – Contrary to `opportunity knocks` idea, opportunities find you if you are making contacts to find them. Do your contacts know of your current interests, career advancement efforts, or your need for information? If not, today is a good day to start calling or sending an Email on these issues.
- 4. Start with People You Know** – Research and ask questions to find out if your loved ones, colleagues, past teachers and mentors, ex-managers, and friends know of any opportunity that match your current goal.

5. **Contact People You Don't Know** – If you got a lead and a referral from people you know, follow-up. You can start a conversation on who referred you and the purpose of the call. Stay positive, enthusiastic and listen carefully to what they say.
6. **Seek Information**– An informational interview will provide you with an opportunity to prepare before applying for a position. Stay focused in your conversation in order to get good information. Give a brief explanation of your objective and accomplishments, and then ask specific questions to get insightful responses to where and when the opportunities will be available. Prepare your questions in advance.
7. **Give and Take** – To build a new contact, the conversation will need to equally balance on give and take. Are you prepared to offer something of value to those who are taking time to assist you?
8. **Image of Reliability** – Whenever you make a promise or agree to a course of action, make sure you deliver, even if it is to drop off a brief thank you note. Persistence and reliability give you credibility.
9. **Professional and Community Membership** – Is there a professional association in the industry you could become a member of? Sometimes, you can visit their staff and officers or attend their events to meet other members who may have leads on opportunities. There are also groups and charitable organizations in need of your expertise and support. If you pursue helping with charitable or community organizing, you will meet others who could assist with identifying new opportunities. One of my clients started her own pre-school program in the basement of her community church which offered free rent and advertisement.
10. **Training** – Whenever you pursue additional training in your profession or sign up for courses in your area of interest, you will meet new people to network and exchange information on new opportunities.
11. **Get a Mentor** – There are experts in every field who are willing to offer you advice, support, resources, coach and mentor you. You will need to find and build a relationship with them. Whenever you get a chance, meet and network with their colleagues who could also in turn direct you to new opportunities.
12. **Get a Career Development Coach** – Contact a career development counselor for an appointment to further explore the how-to-do of career development.

The world is changing and the changes affect economy, job market, job security, and how we do business. It is natural to change careers, hold many jobs, and find new and better ways of enhancing our personal, career, and financial potentials. We cannot possibly find opportunities for growth and advancements without seeking information and/or connecting with experts.

To examine the future of the career of your choice and how to better gear up for advancements in them, visit the website for U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook web page.