



## ASK THE EXPERTS

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NETWORKING

*I understand that networking is crucial for career growth, but I'm unsure how to approach it effectively. What are your top strategies for building and maintaining a professional network that can genuinely benefit my career?*

Networking is one of the most powerful tools for your career growth and success. Make it an ongoing endeavor, instead of a one-time event when you are searching for a new opportunity. Build meaningful, long-term relationships rather than seeking to get something from someone. It is more about “giving” than “getting.” And remember the phrase “six degrees of separation”? You never know who someone else knows.

Following are some tips on how to network effectively.

1. **Make it about “them.”** When you make new connections, focus on listening to the other person. Ask questions, show interest in what they do, and find ways to provide help or insights.
2. **Go beyond formal networking events.** In addition to attending networking events or joining networking groups, expand your reach by joining professional groups, attending workshops, and/or going to alumni, industry, and community events. Be open to connecting with others while standing in lines, participating in fitness activities, and traveling. You never know who you might meet, and that random “stranger” may become someone with whom you can build a long-lasting and fruitful relationship.
3. **Leverage online networking.** Online platforms enable you to meet people you might otherwise never interact with. LinkedIn is a great tool; think of it as a 24/7 networking meeting attended by over 1 billion people. Be strategic in making connections and send notes along with your connection requests that demonstrate what you have in common and how you can benefit the other person.
4. **Nurture your relationships.** Send a follow-up message to new connections and stay in touch periodically. Then when it’s time to leverage your network, request their support by asking for insights, connections, or career guidance. Also, be ready to provide them with the same.
5. **Avoid common networking mistakes.** The biggest mistake people make is only reaching out to their network when they need something. Another mistake is not having a clear understanding of what you bring to the table and what you are looking for; it’s important to make your interactions purposeful.

When you build genuine connections and nurture your relationships, your network can become a great resource for your career growth and support and for identifying new opportunities.

**Career Experts Group**

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