

Guide: How to network

Networking is meeting and forming contacts with other people in your field of business. More specifically, it is used to form business relationships and to identify and create opportunities for both parties. To help you network, we made an elaborate guide which you can use during this process. Here you can find tips on preparation, how to start networking and maintaining your network. It sounds scary but once you do it, networking can give you lots of joy. We wish you all the best of luck!



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Preparation

Before we start networking, we prepare our networking process by answering the following questions:

1. Why do you need a network?

First think of why you need a network. What do you want to achieve with it? What is your goal?

2. Which networks?

Try to think of networks that you want to have access to. Think broad, open minded. Focus on those groups that best fit your (professional) needs and interests.

3. Who do you know?

Do you already know a person, or do you know a person that knows a person? The [6 handshakes rule](#), claims that we can get to know anyone by connecting through 6 people, or even fewer.

4. What do you have to offer?

What do you have to offer to another person or a network? How can you help?

5. How do you introduce yourself?

Have your [elevator pitch](#) ready.

Start to network

Networking is based on visibility. When you have answered the preparation questions, you'll be able to start networking! In this process, be pro-active. Position yourself with your specialism and enthusiasm and take initiative.

How to start networking?

1. Events/Conferences/Meetings

- Participate in events/conferences/meetings
- At the event, step towards people; start via small talk about a mutual colleague/friend, interests, goals etc. Share what you stand for. Tell what you are looking for or have to offer. Keep it transparent!
- At multiple day-events, start with networking on the first day, as mutual interest decreases fast after the start of the event
- Keep in mind the etiquette rules of other persons and/or country
- Attend with a giving mindset; help whenever you can, share advice openly

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- Take pictures / selfies and exchange after the event (this helps perpetuate the contact)
 - Participate in social programs (a must!).

Tip for introverts! Attend small events. Start connecting with people based on the content, make small steps e.g., reach out to persons you already know. Ask that person to introduce you to others.

2. Socialize!

- Participate in social programs at school, work, conferences, meetings, etc.
- Connect with like-minded people via the channels you/they use (LI, Slack, Insta etc.).

3. Presentations

- Present a ppt or poster (with handouts), and/or organize a workshop
- Attend presentations in your field of interest, pose questions and participate in discussions
- Meet with the presenters/lecturers in the break
- Meet new/other colleagues in your specialism
- Keep in contact with colleagues after the presentation through email/social media.

4. Publications

- Publish with (international) colleagues
- Let others also be first author (award your colleagues)
- Inform your network on new articles/papers/achievements.

5. Create a network online (through email/social media)

- Use email pro-active; reply emails as soon as possible, send follow up emails before/after meetings
- Use social media pro-active; connect with people online, send messages and reply messages as soon as possible. LinkedIn is the easiest way to connect. You can easily find the persons that are working/studying in the same field and connect with persons via a request to connect. First wait for the acceptance and then expand the contact via messaging or request to meet up live or online. See also [our LinkedIn guide](#).
- Meet people online, for example via a short meeting via MS teams, to hear more about a person's job/work/life, about the organisation they work at, etc.

Intro examples for requests to connect online

- Would you like to be part of my network?
- Would you like to join or be in my network?
- I saw that you also work with <topics> / in the field of <topics> / in that <area> ...
- I saw that you also know <person>, whom I work with now.
- I have seen you at an interesting event, would be nice to connect with you.
- I liked your presentation very much, would be nice to connect with you.
- We did the same study and I am enthusiastic about your work, shall we connect?

Tips!

- On social media, it is best to first make a connection and when your request is accepted, ask your question/move on with the conversation (if in a hurry you can ask directly)
- If you want a job in a particular organisation and there are no vacancies at this moment, you can ask your contact about future opportunities in this organisation. Or if not the right person, who to connect with (ask name, email address or telephone number)

6. Meet/Visit each other

- Organize meetings/exchanges/(lunch) appointments and invite your contacts/colleagues. These can also be short 1-1 meetings to hear more about a person's job/work/life, about the organisation they work at, etc.
- When visiting abroad, bring typical presents of your home country (can be small presents)
- Make and share pictures if that fits with you.

Maintaining your network

1. Meet/Visit each other

- If you have met somebody at an event, make sure to follow up. For example, make an appointment to (further) discuss a common interest/topic, connect with them online, etc. You can also reconnect sometime after the event, when a (new) common interest/topic comes along
- If you need a person or see an opportunity to help somebody, it's a reason to (re-)connect. Start the conversation by referring to interests/topics you have talked about
- If people from another country come to the location where you are, you can invite them to your home or arrange a warm welcome in another way
- Make and share pictures if that fits with you.

2. Maintain your network online (through email/social media)

- Use email pro-active; reply emails as soon as possible, send digital Christmas cards and such, send follow up emails before/after meetings
- Use social media pro-active; inform your network on interesting developments, update your profile regularly, send messages and reply messages as soon as possible
- Keep contact with people who are important to you ("how are you doing?").

Networking: tips and pitfalls

When it comes to networking, there are also some pitfalls that need to be kept in mind:

- Be yourself, stay true to yourself! Network in a way that fits with your personality and preferences.
- Personal branding is important, share where you stand for. But, very strong political statements can be tricky
- Keep in mind the etiquette rules of other persons and/or country, for example, think of wearing the correct clothing
- Over-enthusiasm is not considered very professional
- Sometimes, presents may be too pushy (be aware of the culture)
- Don't stay too long in a certain club/network, if you feel that there is no common ground anymore. Keep your network fresh
- Do not promise too much, only if you are sure you can fulfil the promise
- Diminish contact when people are not dependable
- Relation building takes time, there must be a mutual interest
- If you do something for someone, don't expect something in return. Don't think as networking only for your own benefits
- Only refer people to others, if you believe in the qualities of that person or network, otherwise it may damage your own reputation
- You don't need to become friend with a person
- Avoid favouritism.