

Networking steps to career success

We've all heard the saying, 'it's not what you know, but who you know', but how exactly does a career seeker or ambitious employee initiate and maintain relationships that will advance and grow their career?



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Kay Vittee, CEO of Quest Staffing Solutions - a staffing solutions company within the white-collar recruitment industry - notes that although industry knowledge and skills are a non-negotiable to get that dream job, networking and forming relationships with leaders and influencers increases opportunities to learn and grow.

Vittee shares her tips on networking.

First impressions

Like with face-to-face networking, a good first impression is crucial in the online and social media networking arena. Popular social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are being utilised by more and more companies to gather information on career seekers and recruit top talent. Making a good first impression on social media profiles can make you more attractive not only to recruiters and employers but also leaders who have the power to reject your request to 'connect'.

Develop impressive communication skills

Networking is focused on communication, in terms of networking for career growth, you want to communicate your thoughts, ideas and that make you stand out from the crowd and demonstrate your ambition and enthusiasm.

Like with most skills, practice makes perfect but a few tips in this regard are: make eye contact, be conscious of your body movements, show interest, ask questions, pronounce words correctly and don't talk too fast.

Identify groups or individuals in your industry

Depending on your industry, interests and goals, do research on which groups or professional associations currently exist - which will most likely have a strong online presence. Professional associations are a great place to meet experts and people with similar interests who you learn from and share ideas with.

Each group or association will also have a leader or influential members who can position you and give you instant credibility with others. This credibility opens opportunities for future career prospects.

Be different by being interesting

Conversations at networking events are often based on small talk and don't materialise into lasting relationships.

Stand out by asking thought-provoking questions and sharing your views on current industry trends.

After the event, and the effort you put in to be different, follow up. A lot of people waste good opportunities for forming relationships by not following up with a call or email after meeting an industry leader or influencer.

Keep it ethical

My last, and most important tip is to keep your networking ethical and professional.

Although corporate networking can assist in growing your career, if these relationships shift to a personal or social level, the results can be unethical.

When developing your networking strategy, avoid recommending a relative or friend for a position of authority, regardless of their qualifications for the particular position. This treads on nepotism (partiality to relatives) or cronyism (to close friends) and overlooks others who may be better suited - and more qualified - for the job.

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