

GET THE JOB

Sharpen Your Networking

Key contacts can make all the difference in a job search.

Professional development is built on a foundation of networking, as trusted friends and credentialed contacts provide expert advice, helpful tips and camaraderie during your tenure with a company. They become even more important when that tenure ends. As you're searching for a job, these same figures can play a critical role in opening up new career pathways.

LOW COST, HIGH REWARD

Networking usually costs little or nothing. The main investment is your time, as you become actively involved in professional groups, online communities and professional websites. You may see fees associated with certain in-person events, particularly conventions, but many local meet-and-greet opportunities are also free of charge. Any one of these moments could lead to friendships – and career-advancing connections.

ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES

Forming new connections online has never been easier on the World Wide Web, thanks to professional sites like LinkedIn and Facebook groups. Begin by reinvesting in your existing relationships. Talk about your history together and goals for the future, then begin mapping out new contacts. Add key decision-makers, professional experts and hiring managers in your field to the conversation. Friend and follow, add comments, write recom-



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mendations and endorse others' skills. Professional courtesies can lead to deeper connections, and perhaps even a future career partnership in real life.

IN-PERSON OPTIONS

Don't rely exclusively on technology. It's a streamlined approach, and easily relied upon – but there's still nothing that compares with face-to-face interactions. Traditional events offer relationship-building opportunities that

help you fill in the blanks of your own story, while putting a face with the name. So, make a point to attend local professional get-togethers, or schedule a lunch or coffee. These conversational moments create more space for you to discuss goals, dreams and job ideas that could open doors.

CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Most industries have related professional associations, and some are even

job-specific. Trade groups, university alumni associations and service organizations are also great places to make future career connections. Join to find out more about the state of the field, leading trends and upcoming staff changes. Helpful new acquaintances will include corporate leadership, industry influencers and other ambitious workers who help keep these companies moving forward. With any luck, you'll soon join them.