

Effective networking strategies for professional success

Ever heard the saying *It's not what you know, it's who you know*? In terms of career growth, the maxim holds a lot of truth. Naturally, you need skills, talent and grit to succeed in your career, but it helps a great deal if you have friends and connections in your chosen field.

Consider that a large number of jobs aren't publicly advertised. Many interview spots are filled through word of mouth, through social media connections, through friend and family networks and established professional circles. If someone can personally vouch for your abilities, that's worth as much – if not more – than a [reference on your resumé](#).

If you want to have the best chances of success in your career, you should build a [solid professional network](#). Part of leaving school and looking for jobs should include developing a [networking strategy](#). In this article, we take a look at the basics of networking and start you off with a list of strategies to establish and [maintain your own professional networks](#).

What are networking strategies?

What is a networking strategy? Put simply, a network strategy is a plan of action for building a circle of contacts and professional connections. A personalised networking strategy is valuable for connecting you with people who might be able to help to reach your [career goals](#). After all, the more people you know and keep in contact with, the more opportunities you'll hear about.

A networking strategy involves meeting new people and maintaining existing relationships that could be important to your career. That means staying in regular contact with relevant extended family and school/university friends, keeping up an online presence, attending professional events, and even joining sports or hobbyist

clubs.

Here are some common examples of networking strategies.

1. Face-to-face networking

Face-to-face networking means socialising or meeting people in person. This includes at dedicated networking functions, graduate/alumni events and business conferences, as well as non-professional gatherings, like sports events and social meetups.

If you're a recent graduate, your face-to-face network strategy will likely include graduate events and non-professional meetups. Join social events that are relevant to your field. Volunteer for community service or join a sports club. Make a goal to meet X amount of new people per event, then make an effort to [maintain that connection](#).

2. Tapping into social media

Part of an effective networking strategy is an online presence. Aside from social media profiles, consider having your own website with an online resumé, [career objective](#) and portfolio (if applicable).

When leveraging social media as a networking tool, remember to keep your posts professional in tone. Keep personal and work-related accounts separate, and remember to occasionally reach out to your contacts to keep the relationship active.

3. Online networking events and webinars

Aside from social media activity, online events and webinars can make up part of your networking strategies. A quick internet search should reveal dedicated online networking events in different fields. Online workshops and webinars are also an effective way of meeting new people in your industry. Additionally, online forums and groups can put you in contact with professionals to add to your network.

4. Creating a strong online presence

Part of optimising your social media to its full advantage is creating a strong online **'brand'**. This means tailoring your profile(s) and posts to project the type of professional image you want potential employers to see. Think of your online profiles as advertisements for you as an employee, and your posts as examples of your abilities.

If you want to build a career in the tech or creative industries, consider building a personal blog or online portfolio, and link to it from your social media posts. Tag connections in your posts and engage their opinions. When building an online presence, just be careful not to overload your network with content. A post or two a week is enough.

5. Contributing to industry publications

Most industries have newsletters, magazines or journals – either business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C). In Australia, some examples of trade magazines include Mediaweek (business), Mumbrella (media and marketing), Hospitality Magazine (hotels/restaurants) and Tech Journal (technology).

Even if you don't have much industry experience, it can be worth reaching out to editors and offering to do reviews or news items, or sending in ideas for interviews or thought pieces. Check your chosen publications' websites for guidelines on how to pitch – or email the editor directly.

Add any published articles to your resumé and website, and keep editors in your professional network, even if you don't end up contributing your writing.

6. Speaking at events and panels

If you have the goal of being an authoritative figure in your industry, you might set your sights on speaking at industry events and sitting on or moderating panels. Fresh graduates probably won't find many opportunities to speak at first, but attending relevant events and getting a familiarity for their content will set you on the right path. Networking at the event and adding the organisers to your professional circle will also help you get a foot in the door.

It's also a good idea to reach out to speakers and panellists after an event. Aside from [expanding your professional network](#), you might be able to get guidance or mentorship in your industry.

7. Hosting workshops and webinars

Another effective form of strategic networking is to host your own event. By asking industry experts to contribute and organising an event for graduates like yourself, you can help others while establishing yourself as a 'mover and shaker' in your chosen field.

Hosting in-person events takes considerable time and effort, so you might choose to organise online events. Start by creating a program for your webinar or event, then confirm your guest speakers (if any), create a digital flyer, then invite your professional network. Think about advertising on social media to really expand your network.

More networking strategies and considerations

When figuring out which networking strategies are best for you, remember to tailor your approach to your desired career path. If you plan on working remotely, then focus on digital-only networking strategies. If one of your [career goals](#) is to work for a particular company in your industry, focus on meeting its managers and employees face to face.

For most people, an effective networking strategy will include a mix of in-person and online professional and social events. You also might attend cultural occasions or enter events like hackathons, fun runs and science competitions to expand your network even more.

It's never too early to make your own personalised networking strategies. While you may not have many professional contacts yet, you can leverage your family-and-friends circle to make new business contacts and attend special events to meet potential employers. Take advantage of events hosted by your college or university, join sports or hobby clubs and create an online presence that reflects your [professional aspirations](#).

Importantly: once you've created a wide network, don't forget to maintain it!