



20 TIPS FOR BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK

By Robbie Miller Kaplan

1. *Join at least one professional or trade association in your field or field of interest.* Attend meetings and target making one new contact per meeting. Volunteer to work on committees or participate in special interest groups. The more active you are, the more contacts you will make. Before joining a group, request an information packet and know what services the organization provides for membership dues. Assess which organization provides information and resources that best meet your needs.
2. *Attend half-day, day, or week-long conferences.* Introduce yourself to speakers and attendees. Obtain list of attendees and speakers and plan on keeping in touch.
3. *Consider professional development programs* an opportunity not only to increase your skills and knowledge, but to expand your network.
4. *Join traditional professional groups* such as fraternal, community, and business groups and clubs.
5. *Attend short programs and speeches in areas of interest* sponsored by networking groups, adult and continuing education, alumni associations, professional and trade associations, and community and governmental organizations. Make contact with attendees, speakers, and sponsors.
6. *Get involved with your alumni association.* Pursue local chapters or set one up yourself. Submit current information concerning your career achievements to the alumni association and follow up with other alumni in your interest area.
7. *Keep in touch with professors and instructors* of college, university, and adult and continuing education courses.
8. *Offer to participate in user groups and committees in your organization.* Be open to working with members of different departments and divisions within your organization.
9. *Write to authors of books and articles in your field.* Establish and pursue a connection.
10. *Contribute articles to LinkedIn and journals & newsletters of trade and professional associations.* Connect with the editors, staff, and readers.
11. *Create a system for keeping track of your network of connections.* Keep track of contact name, organization, position title, email, mailing address, LinkedIn profile, and work and home phone numbers.
12. *Always carry and use business cards.* If your organization doesn't have business cards, order your own. Make it a habit to collect business cards and establish a system for filing them.
13. *Share articles of interest to your contacts* and periodically send them along with a short note.
14. *Plan on meeting your contacts regularly* for breakfast, lunch, or coffee, whatever fits into your schedule.

15. *Invite your contacts* to attend professional meetings, programs, and speeches.
16. *Recommend and exchange resources.* Pass along book and computer software reviews, newsletters, newspapers, reports, and program materials.
17. *Introduce your different contacts to each other* and let others know you are open and interested in meeting new people.
18. When looking for information, *request recommendations and introductions from your contacts.*
19. ***Follow up appropriately and express appreciation.*** Send thank-you notes or take your contacts out to lunch.
20. *Keep your eyes and ears open to contacts' news.* Send notes of congratulations for promotions, new jobs, new accounts or contracts, publications, and any noteworthy event. Send notes of encouragement and sympathy when appropriate.

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