



# GETTING CONNECTED: HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CAREER NETWORK BY USING SOCIAL MEDIA

**How do you prefer to make new contacts? Do you like to meet new people at an event? Being introduced by a friend or a colleague? Are you sometimes nervous about making new contacts within new groups or within a new company?** Try to keep the following things in mind: Networking and connecting with new people is nothing more than getting to know them. Think about it - you are already networking every day and everywhere you go. You are networking when you introduce yourself to others in your sports group, meet a friend of a friend, chat with your neighbor, or catch up with former colleagues.

## MAKING NEW CONTACTS

In terms of career starting or changing, connections are your most important source. Everyone you know can help you move forward in your career.

Most people will gladly assist you if they can or connect you to someone who can give advice. With social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Xing, making connections and getting to know employers has changed the way of job hunting. We are able to find information faster; connecting with others is just a click away, and we can be introduced to new people without meeting in person.

## KNOW WHAT YOU WANT FROM YOUR NETWORKING PARTNER

Nevertheless, it is most important to know what you want from your networking partner when being introduced or making a new connection. You need to figure out your message or your goals before you start. Networking is most effective when you have specific employer targets and career goals. You should know what department of a company you are interested in, what specific topic you want to find out more about, or

which job you always wanted to shadow. It is hard to make an impression with a generic "let me know if you hear of any job openings" request. You may think that if you leave yourself open to all the possibilities, you will have better job luck. The reality is that this openness does not create uniqueness and kills the networking potential of the connection.

## TAKE THE TIME TO MAINTAIN YOUR NETWORK

Maintaining your job network is just as important as building it. Making new contacts can be beneficial but only if you have the time to cultivate the relationships. Try to avoid meeting as many new people as possible. The key is quality, rather than quantity. You will find an incredible range of knowledge, information, and expertise, even within a small network. Focusing on nurturing and maintaining your existing relations holds opportunities. Schedule time with people who can and have

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Paul Ricoeur

been very important to you - your key contacts. Maybe there will be some you have lost touch with. Take the time to reconnect and set up a regular meeting, lunch or phone call. You do not need a lot of reasons to get in touch again. Using social media tools can help you to keep a running list of people you want to reconnect with. Who are the people whose opinions you value? Who are the people you would like to get to know better or whose company you enjoy? Regularly scheduling time with these individuals can help you to make your way down the list.

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#### KEEP YOUR INFORMATION UP TO DATE

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Collecting and inviting people into your social network is a start. But maintaining your contacts requires updates. Add notes about their families, jobs, interests and needs, things that they may not have on their profiles, into your database. Remember to keep your information up to date, too. Make sure

you pick a photo that shows you off well, in a professional light. Freshen up your summary from time to time and mention the biggest accomplishment you had in the past year or month. Did you join a few groups early on, based on invitations or other (perhaps outdated) reasons? Clear out the groups that you don't love, and try some new ones. Don't feel limited to joining employee/ alumni groups. Do you follow the company you wish to work for yet? When you follow a company, for example on LinkedIn or Xing, you can learn about job openings and make yourself seen by commenting on news in the company's activity stream.

Remember that successful networking is always a two-way street. If your goal is to cultivate relationships, it means giving as well as receiving. You will establish a strong network by nurturing relationships with people you can count on for support, ideas, advice, and feedback.

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*These combined experiences well equip Anne to use her empathy skills, her insider's perspective and solution-oriented approach in supporting new graduates, young professionals and junior executives, whether they are entering the workplace at the start of their careers or developing their careers further down the line.*

*Her coaching sessions are available for clients in both German and English. Further information regarding coaching and career advising as well as workshops and relevant career events can be found on [www.anneforster.ch](http://www.anneforster.ch)*