



Top 10 Networking tips for career success
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A recent article in the press claimed that more than a quarter of the UK workforce were looking for a new job. At the same time there have been numerous articles about increasing unemployment, not only in the public sector. So at the start of a new year against a challenging economic backdrop what should people be doing to ensure they are considered for the best and most relevant roles, even if they are not actively looking for a new position?

Here are my top 10 tips based on my own experiences as well as those of people in my network resulting from interviews for my book *The Reluctant Networker* or my networking talks and workshops. They can be summarised into 3 overall objectives:

1. Raise your profile in your field of expertise
2. Deepen existing relationships
3. Build new relationships with relevant people

Tip #1 Make it easy for people to help you

I am always amazed by how willing people are to help others, even if there is no direct 'quid pro quo' for them. People like to help but you have to make it easy by being very clear on what kind of roles you are interested in. Remember how busy everybody is and so we like to 'pigeon-hole' the people we know; so make sure your 'elevator pitch' is succinct and memorable.

Tip #2 Be clear on who you want to network with

You could spend 24 hours a day networking and get very little out of it. Be clear on who you spend time with. Focus on people who are both in your field and likely to help you (what I call my 'business friends'...people who know me already and would be willing to recommend me).

Tip #3 Become an expert in your field

As one of my outplacement contacts told me 'you need to stay "razor-sharp" in your field of expertise' so that when people need specific help they think of you.

Tip #4 Are you making the most from LinkedIn?

LinkedIn has become the main online business networking site with over 80 million members worldwide (at least 4 million in the UK and growing daily). It is a great way of reconnecting with former contacts and then staying in touch with them. Make sure you have a full profile (all past roles/companies as well as your education) listed. 'Follow' companies that interest you and get introductions to these

companies using your existing LinkedIn connections. I have 550+ direct connections which gives me access to over 100,000 2nd degree connections.

Tip #5 Spend more time in coffee shops

So many people think that networking is all about going to events and meeting new people, which they find quite difficult and not that rewarding. I spend more of my networking time in coffee shops or over lunch with existing contacts developing these relationships further.

Tip #6 If you go to networking events make the most of them

Despite a preference for developing 1-2-1 relationships over coffee or lunch I do go to networking events. But be selective about the ones you go to or you could waste a lot of time and get quite disheartened. Target the events where you think the people who you want to network with (see Tip #2 above) are likely to be. And when you are there, make the most of them! Don't just talk to the friend or colleague that you went with or get stuck in a fruitless conversation with the first person that you talk to. Have some 'closers' prepared such as 'it's been a pleasure talking to you but there is someone else I need to go and see' or 'we ought to go and circulate'.

Tip #7 Get speaking!

The best way to find people to talk to at an event is to be a guest speaker! Find a subject on which you are an expert and offer to speak. Organisers are always looking for speakers. It is a great way to raise your profile. Why not invite along some of your contacts as well?

Tip #8 Are you making the most of your company's marketing?

Your company is likely to have a stream of marketing activity that you can help give you a reason to stay in touch with your contacts. This could range from simple things like forwarding on interesting articles/press releases to inviting your contacts to your company's events or taking contacts to sporting/cultural events.

Tip #9 Get in the habit of catch up calls

When did you last see or speak to people on your networking 'focus' list? Why not just give them a call and say 'we have not spoken for a while and I was just wondering how you were getting on?' These sorts of calls can often lead to a face-to-face meeting over coffee or lunch (see Tip #5)

Tip #10 How can I help?

So many people tell me that they find networking difficult because they feel awkward asking people for help. Effective networkers spend as much time helping others as being helped. Always be on the lookout for ways you can help your contacts such as interesting articles, people for them to meet or career opportunities. It feels good to help others and you never know when they will repay the favour.

See www.reluctantnetworker.com for more information