



## Guide to Networking

Networking is all about building relationships. This is key when searching for a job, supporting your ongoing development or career aspirations. Do this effectively and it may open doors for you in the future. Whilst networking can be rewarding, it requires preparation, motivation and sometimes a bit of courage, as it can feel a bit daunting especially if you are doing it for the first time.

### Where can you find networking opportunities?

Networking opportunities can present themselves in many different situations or settings and can be formal or informal. Here are some examples :

#### Informal – day to day networking:

- Social media - this is a quick, far reaching and effective method of networking. However, don't forget to stay safe on social media. *Please refer to our 'Guide to social media' for more help on this topic.*
- Online forums or groups – conduct a search and join relevant networks that are of interest and can take you in the direction you want to go in.
- Build ongoing relationships with existing contacts including family, friends, colleagues, tutors or peers.

#### Formal - proactive approach:

- Attending clubs or societies which could be social or professional nature.
- Volunteering or work experience.
- Face to face career open days, events or talks.

Whichever setting or method you chose to conduct your networking activities, the aim is to make valuable and relevant connections.



### Preparing to network

Here are some steps you can take to make the most out of any networking opportunity that comes your way:

1. **Prepare** – consider the reasons why you want to network with someone and what you want to get out of it. For example think about who will be attending an event and the questions you want to ask.
2. **Introduce yourself** – this can be a bit daunting, however if in doubt practice with friends and family first. Be confident, most people you meet will be glad you are taking an interest in them. When starting of any conversations briefly introduce yourself and provide the reason you want to talk.
3. **Ask open ended questions and listen** – This allows the person you are speaking to the opportunity to give more detailed answers. Ensure you show them you are active listening and remain engaged.
4. **Continue the relationship** – if you would like to continue the relationship, seek the chance to exchange contact details or make a connection with them via social media so that you can continue the conversation.



## Who can help build your network?

Start with people you know, family, friends and then broaden your network as you go.

Family and relations

Past bosses or workmates

Friends

Teachers, Tutors, Lecturers, Career Advisors



Past Classmates

Religious or other group members

Neighbours

Social Media contacts

Together we can make feel good happen



## Hints and Tips

Effective networking takes time and commitment. It is essential that you approach it in the right way and be patient. Here's some top tips to help you succeed:

- ✓ **Invest your time** – prepare for networking opportunities or for conversations with your connections to ensure that you are getting the most out of the opportunity.
- ✓ **Build trust by being honest** – this is key. Be open and honest about your intentions to connect to help build trust.
- ✓ **Respect the relationship** – ensure you show respect and interest to those you meet, remember they are making space in their busy lives to help you.
- ✓ **Be clear** – if there is a particular purpose you wish to achieve through networking then be clear and open about these expectations or aims so that the right person can be identified to support you.
- ✓ **Share something back** – the networking/relationships you build should be mutually beneficially so be prepared to share information or insights back. Remember if you don't feel comfortable sharing anything, then don't.
- ✓ **Quality not quantity** – it is impossible to effectively maintain relationships with a large network. Identify those key individuals or groups that are mutually beneficially and can help you to achieve your goals, then continue to build those relationships on an ongoing basis.
- ✓ **Follow up** – don't forget to follow up on a conversation or meeting, thank the person for their time and let them know how nice it was to meet them. If there was something in your conversation with them that you found particularly interesting let them know.
- ✓ **Review** – at times your goals or aims will change. When this happens, review your network to establish whether you need to branch out in a new direction.

