8 Easy Networking Tips for Busy People

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We all know that networking is a key building block for professional advancement. But with the competing demands of personal and professional lives, networking takes time that many of us just don’t have. So, how do you network when you’re too busy to network?

Here are eight ways to increase and mobilize your network, strategically and purposefully, without clocking hours at meet-and-greets or informational meetings.

#1. Get addicted to LinkedIn.

Instead of spending your free time scrolling through Facebook and Instagram, make LinkedIn your default destination. With over 500 million users across the globe, LinkedIn is perhaps the most obvious way to network on the go. Whether you’d like to stay in touch with someone you just met at a conference or peruse lists of like-minded professionals in your field, LinkedIn is a great resource. Just like building relationships through any other online platform or real-life connection, lead with professionalism, intention, and gratitude. It’s not enough to simply link to people, you have to activate your LinkedIn network by posting, following, and updating your profile to continually build your network.

#2. Share and reshare on social media.

Beyond LinkedIn, there are many ways to leverage social media for networking. Make sure that your presence reflects you as a professional and the professional you’d like to grow into. A quick and easy way to keep up your presence without spending a lot of time is to repost articles, updates at your organization, or innovations in your field. This way, you keep popping up on people’s feeds without having to create content yourself.

#3. Create a targeted list.

Having thousands of people at your fingertips can be overwhelming. Create a targeted list of who you’d really like to connect with and channel your energy there first. Think: How can this person meaningfully contribute to my professional trajectory? Brainstorm ways to get in touch and make sure you have an “ask” or purpose for the call/email/meeting.

#4. Make it easy for people to reach you.

In a time of information overload, make it simple for people to reach out to you and know who you are and what you do. Package yourself in a way that is easily digestible for people. For example, make sure any outreach has your LinkedIn profile, your title, and ways to get in touch with you. If you’re asking for a meeting, include potential days/times and utilize technology like automated scheduling software or Skype to make it easy to connect virtually.

#5. Utilize your existing network.

Networking isn't just about growing the number of people you're connected to; it's also about activating the people you already know. You may be sitting on a gold mine! Ask for introductions from people who are already in your network and think about how those you know can influence your path toward success. Hack: Sales Navigator (previously Rapportive) is a Google Chrome plug-in that allows you to view the LinkedIn profile of your various contacts right in your Gmail.
#6. Investigate selective networking groups.
Selective networking groups are a great way to get a big bang for your buck. These groups are sources that lead to high-quality networking and whose sponsored events you know will actually be worth your time. There are professional associations for almost every sector, as well as local and regional groups of professionals. You may also find that networking groups like Ellevate, which is aimed at professional women across the country, are particularly helpful. Check to see whether your employer offers professional development dollars for this type of activity.

#7. Position yourself as a resource.
You have skills and expertise that can be leveraged as a value-add to others in your network, inside or outside of your company or organization. You are also a connector for other people. Use that power for good; it will deepen your connections.

#8. Say “YES!”
Shonda Rhimes said it best. But take her “Year of Yes” and turn it into a lifetime of yes. If someone comes to you with a question, an ask, or an invitation, say “yes.” It’s a small investment of your time and you never know what may come out of it. As you gain seniority and your network expands, use your yeses less often and more strategically.

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