

5 Ways To Meet New Professional Contacts

A referral through someone in your network is a highly effective way to land a job. Sometimes, it's not just what you know, but who you know. An endorsement from someone the hiring manager trusts is an extremely powerful means of influence. People in your network are also a great source of information about relevant job openings, and may be able to provide advice about how best to position yourself to the company.

Related: [Top 10 People You Must Have In Your Network To Find A Job](#)

Sometimes, the best opportunities don't reach job boards or recruiters because people within the network of the hiring company get to it first. For these reasons, I highly recommend continually putting in time and effort to [building a strong professional network](#). Below are five [ways to meet new professional contacts](#):

Conferences And Events

Attending a conference or event is a great way to meet a large group of professional contacts. Professional events are often publicized through industry newsletters and blogs. Try to find a guest or speaker list to determine if the event is worth attending. This will also allow you to be productive with your time if you do attend.

Conferences relevant to your industries of interest or skill sets may generate the most opportunities. Ideally, the conference will also offer great speakers and some educational value. Introduce yourself to people at the event engage in casual conversation about the topic and your professional interests. If you'd like to stay in touch, get their business card or contact information and send a thoughtful and personalized e-mail the next day.

Remember, people attend conferences and events for the same reason you are – to expand their networks.

Introductions Through People You Know

Looking within your network for introductions is one of the most effective ways to generate new professional contacts. Ask people you know for contacts in the industry, at specific companies you'd like to work for, or even specific people within a department. Use LinkedIn to identify individuals you would like to meet, and look at your shared connections. If you're changing roles or industries, scheduling "informational interviews" with people is a great way to learn, get advice, and obtain more relevant introductions.

Cold Reach Outs

If there's someone you would really like to meet, and you don't have a strong connection, you'll have to reach out cold. Your success rate will vary depending on the role of the person you're reaching out to, and the value you offer. An [effective cold e-mail](#) is short, personalized, and clearly describes how you can help the person and why they should meet with you. You can engage with the person on the public social networks that they engage on, such as Twitter, Quora, or their blog, to "warm up" your cold e-mail.

Personal Interest Groups

Interacting with someone around shared interests outside of work is a great way to build rapport and get to know someone. Find groups around your interests such as politics, religion, volunteering, or hobbies such as an intramural sports team or a book club. Personal interest groups aren't the most focused approach to meeting professional contacts, but casting a wide net is important. You never know who you'll meet; remember these people bring a network to the table as well.

Private Events, Groups, And Parties

Private events, groups and parties can also be helpful for business networking, to enhance your personal interests such as poker, or strictly social. Have a friend bring you to a party where you won't know anyone. People often spend time with people of similar strength, so if you like your friend, it's likely that he/she will know other good people. Team up with a colleague to host your own small event. Have each organizer invite a few people. You could even tell the people you invite that they can bring people. Before you know it, you'll have a large group!

Conclusion

If there isn't a group or event for your particular interest, organizing that event or group can be a great way to become a thought leader in a particular space. If you have a certain expertise, you might consider making yourself available to speak at an event. Getting started is the hardest part, but over time your network will start growing exponentially faster as the people you meet start introducing you around.