



Talent for technology

Networking

[2017]

Networking

Introduction

When looking for a new job networking can provide information, ideas and incredible opportunities. It's a proactive way of forging connections and getting the ball rolling for your career, but some find the term intimidating and are reluctant to try it. So what is networking really all about?

It's not what you know...

The word 'networking' can make some people feel uncomfortable. They envisage disingenuous, manipulative and exploitative relationships with overly ambitious colleagues, yet this couldn't be further from the truth. Networking, much like any form of relationship, is all about trust and mutual interest.

Even without actively networking you will already have a network; family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and acquaintances could all potentially help you discover your dream job. It's not about using someone for your own gain but expanding your options and finding support with likeminded people.

Start your networking journey by looking through your current phone, email and social media contacts. Why not reconnect with an ex-colleague over coffee or message a classmate from university to see how they're getting on?

You have a new friend request

Social media has completely changed the way we interact with one another. Initially the internet was used solely for entertainment purposes and staying connected with the people you already knew, but now it's a sea of exciting content, fascinating information and communicating with people you would never have had the chance to meet in real life. Oh, and there's the occasional funny cat video as well...

The best social media platforms to use for professional connections are Twitter and LinkedIn. You can search for people who have similar jobs, interests, hobbies and ideals, but you can also search for people who are higher or lower on the career ladder to you. Although you should always be aware of social etiquette when talking online, everyone is accessible.

It's a good idea to join groups on LinkedIn related to your career ambitions and to make the information on your profile relevant, current and informative so that others can get a good understanding of who you are. Look to other users for inspiration and immerse yourself in the culture of online networking.

Face-to-face

Online networking is a great start, but it's important to make connections in person as well. Going to a networking event might sound nerve-wracking but by talking to attendees online first you will know what and who to expect.

Once you've found an event to go to, do some research and have a few key subjects to talk about in case you get tongue-tied. Read some contemporary articles and consider your thoughts about them. Be yourself, and if someone has a differing opinion listen to them, take what they say on board but ultimately have your own say.

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You might not want to but go to the event alone to force yourself to mingle, otherwise it's likely that you'll stick to the person you went with. With some interesting conversation topics in your arsenal and a handful of recognisable faces online you should have plenty to start off with!

Make some fans

You can't fake authenticity. To make solid networking relationships both on and offline it's best to be as open and honest as possible. Don't speak to people just to get something from them because it will be obvious and you'll end up gaining a reputation as a user – people talk!

When it comes to talking to those you respect and idolise in your industry, don't take up too much of their time with requests or barrage them with compliments. Keep initial contact brief and to the point and don't try to force any kind of networking opportunity unless they're interested.

Keep in touch

It's just as important to maintain connections as it is to make them. Having a large network that you don't feel comfortable or confident interacting with is as useless as knowing no one at all! You should aim to build on your professional relationships rather than focus on collecting contacts.

Participating in discussions on message boards, forums and groups is a great way to keep up with your newfound network as well as sharing information on relevant topics. Don't be afraid to ask questions and request advice not only to keep a conversation going but also to learn and progress within your chosen industry.

You can't predict or choose which member of your network will lead you towards some exciting opportunities in the future, so treat everyone as a valued connection.

Final thoughts

- Remember that both professional and personal networks could prove valuable to your career
- Don't just focus on building your network – make sure you maintain relationships. It would be like sowing seeds and not tending to the flowers
- Talk to lots of different people rather than just those in a desired position
- Be yourself
- Spend time speaking to your network both online and in person
- Networking is all about connecting with like-minded people, not about seeing what favours you can get

Any questions?

If you need more information about preparing for a job interview or would like to know about the latest vacancies we have at Lorien, contact our team on info@lorien.co.uk