

Create a Solid Network

Creating a solid network requires you to make connections. It is not enough to simply meet people; you need to meet the right people, people who are likely to develop a professional relationship with you. This requires you to search for connections carefully.

Where to find possible connections:

- **Referrals:** Ask friends, peers, or family to introduce you to like-minded people. You never know who you might meet.
- **Join groups:** Professional societies offer numerous opportunities to meet new people and make connections.
- **Attend events:** Networking events can be intimidating, but they are essential. You may not make useful connections at every event, but you will not make any connections staying home.

Saying the Wrong Thing

People often say the wrong things in social settings. A misplaced word or phrase can have disastrous effects on your network. The best way to address this obstacle is to speak carefully. Prepare yourself before every meeting. Make a list of topics to avoid and topics that are suitable, and stick to it. While you are in a social setting, mind your manners.

- **Avoid alcohol:** Drinking too much can result in questionable behavior
- **Do not criticize:** Overly critical attitudes will affect you negatively
- **Be courteous:** Treat everyone, even the competition, with courtesy

Unfortunately, miscommunications are inevitable given enough time. If you accidentally say the wrong thing to someone, apologize immediately.



Follow-Up

Following up with contacts is essential for building a strong network. Follow-up requires you to provide individual attention. Mass emails are not sufficient to establish relationships with contacts and grow a network. It is important that you follow-up with people quickly. A general rule of thumb is to follow-up with new contacts within 24 hours of the first meeting. After this, it is useful to follow-up with contacts at least once a month. If you fail to follow-up with contacts in a timely manner, they are not likely to remember their earlier conversations with you.

It is important to know when a contact is not interested in becoming part of your network. If a contact does not respond to you after three attempts to follow-up, move on and focus your energy on other people.