

10 PLACES YOU ARE ALREADY NETWORKING



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Building Your Network

Networking is crucial for career growth and success as it allows you to build relationships, gain insights, and access opportunities that may not be publicly advertised. Many people underestimate the importance of networking or approach it with the wrong mindset, treating it as a transactional exchange rather than an opportunity to genuinely connect and provide value to others. When done effectively, networking can lead to job referrals, job promotions, mentorship, business partnerships, and a stronger professional reputation, ultimately accelerating your career development and opening doors that would otherwise remain closed.



Important tip

Share your goals and aspirations with everyone you meet. You never know what door they could open.

I have found that one of the best ways to build your network is to make meaningful connections over shared interests. For that reason, I'd like to offer 10 ideas of where you can build your network outside of traditional networking events. You may already be taking part in one or more of these activities, but maybe you haven't considered the people you are meeting through these forums as connections to help you reach your goals and dreams. I encourage you to think differently about how these close (or loose) ties could be the key to unlocking new opportunities.

1. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

If you work in a corporate setting, it is likely that your company has employee resource groups. These are voluntary, employee-led groups within an organization that aim to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace. They often are formed for the purpose of providing support, community, professional development, and cultural awareness. They are also a great way to meet people outside of your team.

ERGs provide a space to connect with coworkers around a shared sense of identity or topic of interest, which has the potential to create much stronger ties than the usual discussions about the current project you're working on. Take advantage of these opportunities to build meaningful relationships in the workplace. You never know who you'll meet and how they might help you grow into a new role within your current organization or maybe even elsewhere.





2. Alumni Events

The diploma(s) on your wall are so much more than a symbol of the knowledge you've attained. They are also the key to a small network of people you know and a much larger network of people you've never met.

Most of the time when you think of alumni events, you think of college. This could also apply to high school, certification programs, or leadership programs. For any group training you have taken, it is unlikely that you were the first or the last to go through it. That shared experience is the gateway to a conversation with others who may be the connection to your next big opportunity.

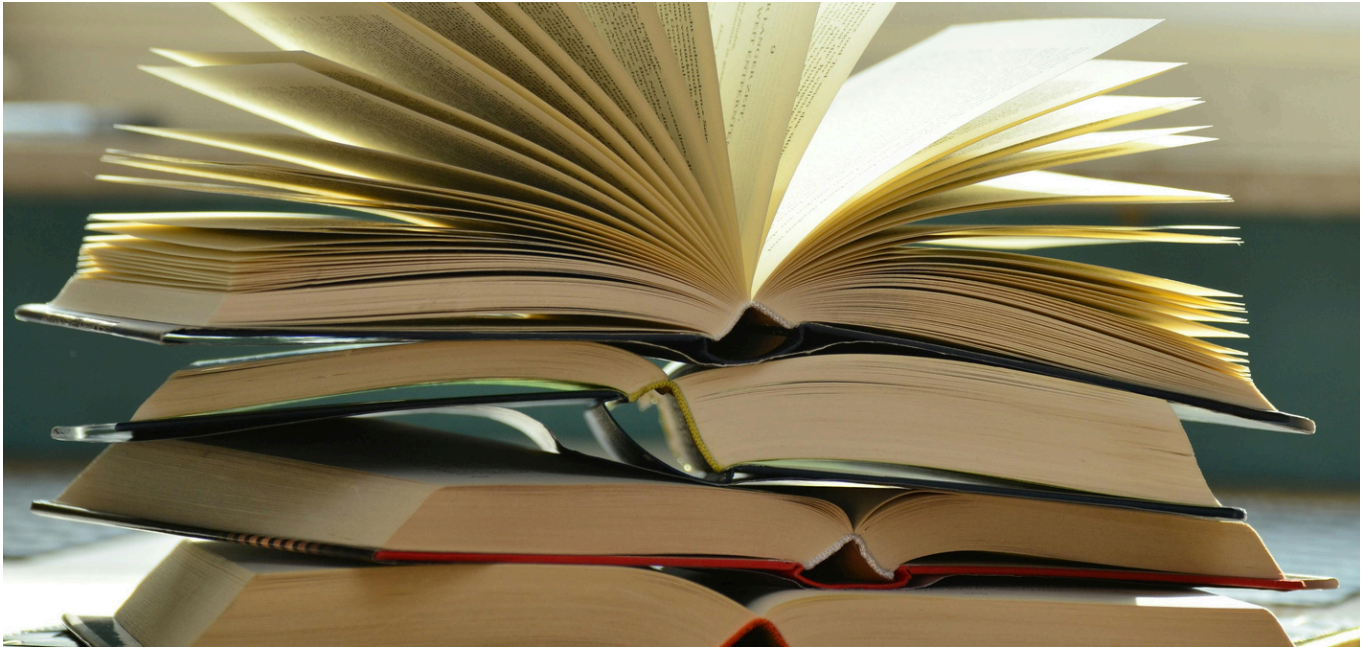
So check back in with the schools and organizations you've graduated from and see what events they have coming up or if there is a directory that you can access. They may also have other resources you can access for free as an alumnus of their program. You won't know unless you ask.

3. Educational Events like TEDx and CreativeMornings

You may have seen TED Talks online, but have you seen one in person? TEDx groups are putting on events all over the world. Their tagline is “Ideas worth spreading,” so the audience innately wants to discuss what they learn from these presentations which is part of how the ideas spread. Why not be one of the people on-site at the events where they film these talks to discuss the ideas?

CreativeMornings is a similar platform that hosts a free monthly breakfast lecture series in cities across the globe. It is another great place to learn and connect with others. These are global examples, but many communities have their own educational series through various local organizations that bring like-minded people together. Some places you might be on the lookout for these types of events are Meetup, Eventbrite, or Facebook Events.





4. Book Clubs

Another way to turn learning into your social network is through book clubs. You can find one or form one on your own, then encourage your friends to invite their friends to join.

Research has shown that weak ties have been known to garner more professional opportunities than strong ties. So getting to know friends of friends through something casual like a book club is a great way to build your network.

5. Worship Small Groups

If your center of spirituality organizes small groups (ex. Bible study), these are a great opportunity to connect with people who share your values. You may not have crossed paths were it not for your faith and it might be worth your time to get to know these folks better.

They are already inclined to vouch for your character based on your shared faith, so why not let them get to know you a little better in case the opportunity arises for them to also vouch for your knowledge and skills. They may one day come across a role for which you would be a good fit.





6. Neighborhood Associations

Getting involved in your immediate community has many benefits. Knowing your neighbors provides a sense of safety and security. It also creates a sense of belonging and gives you access to more information about local businesses, events, and news. We all want to see our neighbors succeed because it creates a sense of stability in our community. That's part of what makes the neighborhood association a great place for building your network. Your success is their success.



7. Volunteer

Giving back to the community through causes you care about is a great way to make connections. Whether it's representatives from the organization itself or fellow volunteers, these people see your heart for a mission they also hold dear and are now first-hand witnesses to your skill sets, knowledge, and work ethic. They see you helping others and are proven helpers themselves through their involvement. You can see how ripple effects are inevitable.





8. Co-Working

If you work from home or have a hybrid work schedule consider using a co-working space. You don't have to go every day, but if you show up consistently on the same days of the week you will surely start to see familiar faces and make new friends while waiting at the coffee machine (or pouring yourself a beer depending on the co-working space and the hours you choose to spend there).

It's the perfect environment for talking about what you do and the contributions you are making to your current projects.

9. Art Classes

There are many options for where to take art classes if you want to flex your creative muscles. Many museums will offer art classes, as will small local shops. There are chains like AR Workshop or Wine & Design. There are also the mom-and-pop operations that teach pottery, glass-blowing, and so much more. Doing an activity with others gives you something to talk about (the process, the supplies, etc.) and can serve as a bonding experience. It's a great opportunity to make new friends and if you're looking for a reason to exchange contact information or connect on social media, use your art piece as the excuse. They just HAVE to see where you display it once it's done.





10. Fitness & Sports

Much like art classes, fitness and sports provide opportunities to bond with others over a common interest and/or challenge. Many sports are dependent on teamwork so this is an environment where people can see your soft skills in action. Recreation and networking CAN be one and the same.



NETWORKING SCORESHEET

Let's review all the places you might already be networking and assess where you are on your journey to greater opportunities.

IN THE WORKPLACE:

You participate in an ERG or other social group unrelated to work projects

AS AN ALUMNUS:

You are still actively engaging that school or program and other alumni

WITHIN THE LAST 3 MONTHS:

You have attended an educational event like TEDx or CreativeMornings

YOU HAVE PLANS TO:

Discuss the book you are currently reading with others through book club

THROUGH YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP:

You are involved in a small group to build stronger connections

WHERE YOU LIVE:

You are involved in a neighborhood association or similar organization

IN THE NEXT 3 MONTHS:

You are signed up to volunteer for a cause that you care about

YOU CAN BE FOUND:

Working from a co-working space on a consistent schedule

AS A CREATIVE OUTLET:

You have signed up for a group art class that you can't wait to attend

WHEN YOU WORKOUT:

You are in community with others through a class or team sport.

_____ / 10 **Tally up your check marks here. How'd you do?**

Want to take greater advantage of these opportunities?

Book a FREE strategy call today at bit.ly/connectivitycoaching
Let's map out your path to success!

Conclusion and Next Steps

This is just a short list of ideas on how you can expand your network. ***The moral of the story here is that networking doesn't have to be hard work. It can be done through the things you enjoy and care about.*** Don't discount your leisure time as separate from your goals and ambitions. These things work together. Don't forget about the networks you joined many years ago that are still active and would love to see you more engaged. And don't discount your current coworkers from helping you get to your next opportunity, internally or externally.



Thank you!

If you'd like to strengthen your ability to connect with others and effectively leverage your relationships in ways that are healthy and mutually beneficial book a FREE strategy call today.

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