



Career Development

What are the benefits of networking?

The word networking means different things to different people. Successful business people will tell you that active networking is vital to career growth. Networking can often be confused with selling, but is actually about building long-term relationships and a good reputation over time. It involves meeting and getting to know people who you can assist, and who can potentially help you in return. Your network includes everyone from friends and family to work colleagues and members of groups to which you belong.

True networking is an art, and is extremely beneficial to your career and development prospects and can add the following value when done correctly:

Strengthen your relationships

Networking is about giving and sharing, not taking. No one wants to be around a person who is only looking for an opportunity to sell to them. Real networking is about forming trust and helping one another toward goals. Regularly engaging with your contacts and finding opportunities to assist *them* helps to strengthen the relationship. By doing this, you are basing your relationships on reciprocity and are far more likely to receive assistance when you need help achieving your goals.

Get fresh ideas

Your network can be an excellent source of new ideas and fresh perspectives that can help you in your role. Exchanging information on challenges, experiences and goals is a key benefit of networking because it allows you to gain new insights that you otherwise may have overlooked. Similarly, be open to listening to others and offer helpful ideas to your contacts. This is an excellent way to build your reputation as an innovative thinker and a trustworthy business acquaintance.



Raise your profile

Essential to career growth and development is industry visibility. Getting noticed is a key benefit of networking that will happen naturally with regular attendance at professional and social events. You can then build your reputation (over time!) as knowledgeable, reliable and supportive by offering useful information or tips to people who need it. Check if your employer's industry affiliations and memberships – you may find you have easier access to networking opportunities than you realise.

Gain access to new opportunities

Expanding your network of contacts can open doors to many new opportunities, sometimes without the need for active perusal. By regular attendance at networking events and developing a trustworthy relationship over time you will open yourself up to anything from new business ventures, career advancement, personal growth, or simply new knowledge. Active networking keeps you top of mind when opportunities such as job openings arise and also increases the likelihood of you receiving introductions or referrals to the people key to that opportunity.

New Information

Networking is a great way to share and exchange best practice knowledge, learn about new and different business techniques and stay abreast of the latest industry developments. Always keep your ears open to information that can be applied inter-industry. A wide network of informed, interconnected contacts means broader access to new and valuable information.

Advice and Support

Everyone needs advice, support and guidance in their careers. It is helpful to have the ability to receive this from different groups of people, from family to friends to colleagues. Gaining the advice of experienced peers, whether they belong to your industry or not, is an important benefit of networking. Discussing challenges and opportunities opens the door to valuable suggestions and guidance. Again, be prepared to offer genuine assistance to your contacts also as it sets a strong foundation for receiving the support and advice in return when you may need it.

For more information about career growth and development, or for CV writing and interview techniques please contact one of our friendly, dedicated consultants today or check our website for the date of our next free workshop!