



// Your guide to virtual networking

Tips and resources for teams
navigating a new world of work

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Networking by numbers

The benefits to networking are immense. From helping you land your next career opportunity to maintaining your business relationships, expanding and retaining your network is key.

85%
of jobs

are filled through
networking

79%
of people

believe networking
is useful for career
progression

35%
of people

acquired a new
opportunity through
a casual LinkedIn
conversation

70% of people are hired for a role at a company where they have connections.

Around **80% of jobs** are not published. Most hiring is through friends and acquaintances.

77% of recruiters use LinkedIn as part of their recruitment efforts.

Source: LinkedIn - various studies



What does networking look like now?

With the pause button pushed on the entire world, establishing and maintaining professional relationships is proving to be a somewhat difficult task right now.

With conferences and industry events being postponed and cancelled in a domino-like effect globally, our opportunities to connect face-to-face are dwindling by the second.

However, not all hope is lost. We live in a digital age after all! With a multitude of communication technologies at our fingertips, we have the ability to connect with people far and wide, all with the click of a button.

Our networking doesn't have to suffer just because we can't leave our house. We can expand our network and nurture our connections, all without leaving the four walls of our own home.

How, you may ask? Well we're here to help. Here are our top tips on how you can virtually expand and maintain your network in 2020.



Meeting new people

Meeting new people is essential to broaden your network, but how can you go about this when your opportunities to interact with others are few and far between? It's a challenging task, however, thanks to technology, there are ways that you can forge these meaningful connections without physically meeting. Here's what we suggest:

1 // Provide value

It can be difficult to establish professional relationships during this time of flux, especially as offices are closed and industry events cancelled. So what opportunities do you have to approach those who are not within your internal network? This is where providing value comes in. The worst thing you can do right now is try to sell.

With feelings of uncertainty and anxiety rife across organisations, what you want to do is provide support and value. To do this, you should leverage digital networking platforms, such as LinkedIn, to generate content of use. Share any tips you may have for managing a remote team, keeping your workers engaged, or any other insights you may have to provide hope for the future. You want to be a voice of optimism right now.

The content you create will engage others and allow you to interact with people beyond those you already know.

Here are some ideas on how you can provide value:

Write an article

Collate all your thoughts into an article to publish on LinkedIn, addressing the issues you've found others in your field are currently facing. It's a great excuse to engage with your network, as you can reach out to see what they are struggling with.

Start a blog

Become an expert in your field and start your own blog. There are a number of platforms you can use for this, from Wordpress to Wix to Weebly, and they're free. It's great to have one place where all your content is stored. Keep your comments on and encourage two-way discussion.

Also, make sure there is a way your readers can interact with you personally – either by providing an email address or connecting your LinkedIn account.



2 // Engage with others

LinkedIn will become your best friend when networking remotely. You can connect with those in your same profession or industry, and even with those who share similar interests. A great way to expand your professional network is to engage with the content others are creating. If there is a thought leader in your field and you really resonate with the content they are delivering, then you should reach out and let them know. This could be the start of a great professional friendship. You can also comment on and engage with others' posts, bringing yourself more exposure. Otherwise, there are a plethora of groups on LinkedIn that you can join to interact with like-minded professionals and expand your network.

3 // Attend virtual events

You can't attend any physical conferences right now, but you can still engage with others in your field through technology. There are a number of webinars and virtual conferences that you can hop into, and they make networking easy. How simple is it to quickly find a speaker on LinkedIn and strike up a conversation? Provide your thoughts on what they discussed in the webinar, and have some questions ready. You may just find that you have a lot in common.

You can also connect with other virtual conference attendees through online channels. If you have similar interests or work in the same industry, then you would have a lot to discuss. You can also learn of what is working well for them in their company, and share any suggestions you may have based on your experience. Remember, now is the time to be supporting your peers. The spirit of community should be strong.

4 // Be genuine

Be genuine in your attempts to connect with other professionals. If you go into it with a selfish agenda, only trying to extract something of value for yourself, then you will have no success in establishing strong connections. The key takeaway? Don't reach out only when you need something. Treat these connections as you would a friendship. You don't make friends just so you can ask for favours.

5 // Stay in touch

So, you've managed to form all these new connections. Now you want to make sure you actually maintain them. The key to successful networking is being authentic in your interactions.

Reach out to your new contacts to see how they are going and to see if they are struggling with anything. If you know they are having trouble virtually interviewing candidates, then provide some insights about what your company is doing. You may even stumble across an article that clearly addresses their problem. If this is the case, you should share it with them. It shows that you care.

You can also maintain these connections by engaging with their LinkedIn posts. A simple comment or like can go a long way in showing your support and nurturing this relationship.

The key here is to be present and to put in the effort to keep these connections going. Here are some of our suggestions for how you can achieve this:

// **Hop on a video call.** By hearing their voice and seeing their face, it adds a human element to your interaction, especially if you've never met in person before.

// **Agree on a time.** Connect at a time that works well for both of you. If you operate in different time zones, don't try to schedule a call when it's 12am in their city. Be respectful of their time.

// **Connect across multiple platforms.** Your interactions don't need to be limited to LinkedIn. You can connect across a number of communications platforms, such as email, WhatsApp or Zoom. Find which platforms work best for both of you.

// **Host a virtual discussion.** Use video technology tools to engage your new contacts in a virtual discussion. You can learn what each person is doing in their organisation to deal with the disruption that COVID-19 has caused, or to simply share your thoughts on topics of interest. This will help you in developing a support base that you can continue to engage with going into the future.



Maintaining existing relationships

Relationships last when you maintain them, so what can you do to nurture your existing connections to keep them by your side for the long haul? Here are our suggestions:

1 // Take a human approach

When networking, both with your internal network and the broader professional community, you should not be going in for the sell. Now, more than ever, we need to be prioritising real, human relationships over anything else.

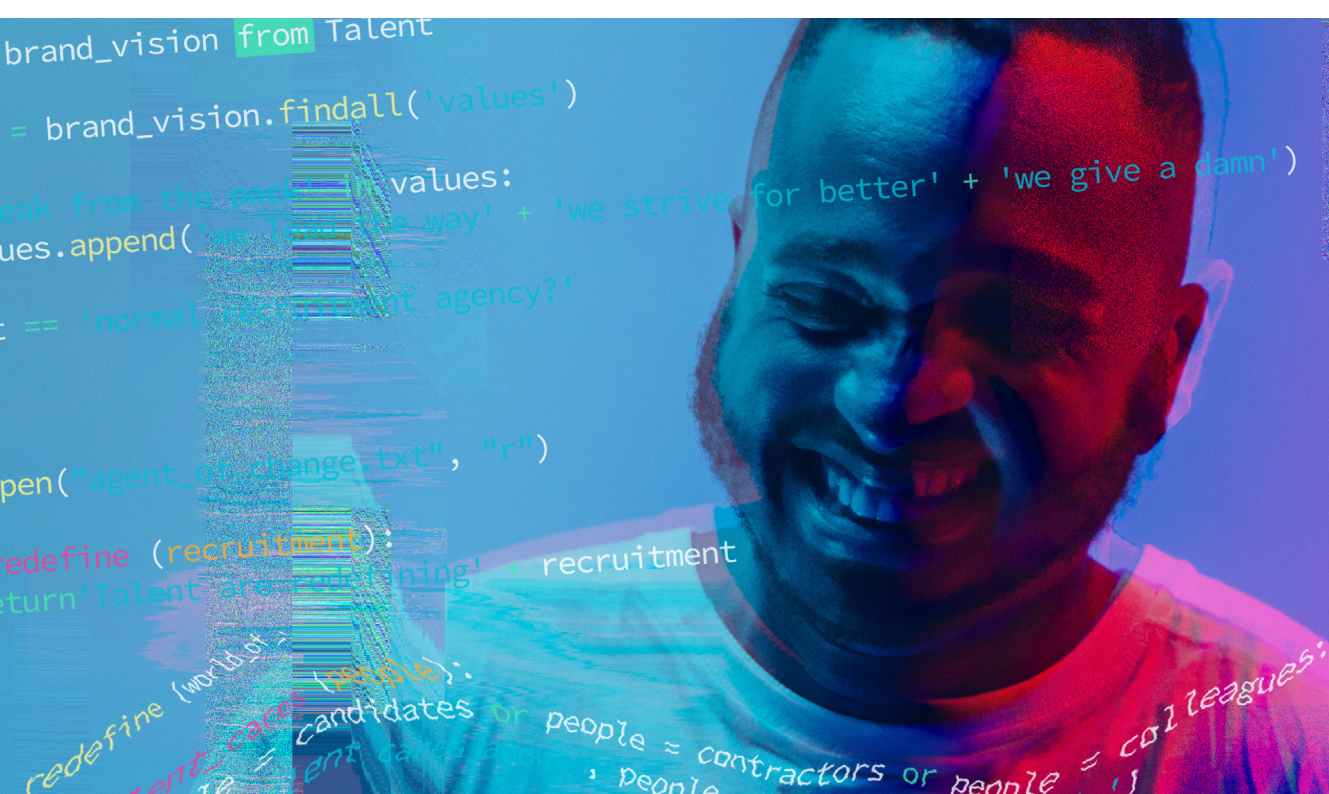
Reach out to your colleagues to see how they are going and to see if you can support them in any way. Determine if there are any resources you can provide to help them, or whether you can simply lend a listening ear. This goes beyond a superficial connection. Being authentic in your approach means you can forge some of your strongest working relationships.

2 // Create value

Interact with your current network and see if they have any common issues or questions that they are looking for advice on. You can use this to create your own content to share with them – free of charge, of course. You don't want to be profiting off a bad situation. You want to be engaging in this spirit of community and support. Email your network any content that you feel will be of use and that will help solve their most pressing issues.

3 // Keep in contact

Stay in regular contact with your existing connections. This is essential if you are to maintain these relationships. Check in with them regularly and engage with what they post online. Just like you would nurture a friendship, you should be doing the same with your professional relationships. It's important to keep these relationships going strong, especially during this time of uncertainty.



Virtual **business** development

You have a great network of clients that you have built up over the years, but how do you develop these relationships when you can't physically interact? Here are our top tips for maintaining these business connections remotely:

1 // Trust is key

Establishing trust is paramount. Be responsive and reliable. Your client will have faith that you will deliver results and will want to continue to work with you.

2 // Use technology

Use face-to-face technologies, such as Skype or Zoom, to stay in contact. You can integrate a human element, and mitigate the risk of any miscommunication that may occur when emailing.

3 // Check in regularly

Check in, not out, with your clients. Schedule in meetings so you can see if there is anything you can assist with. Through being present, you'll remain front of mind for future work.

4 // Small gestures count

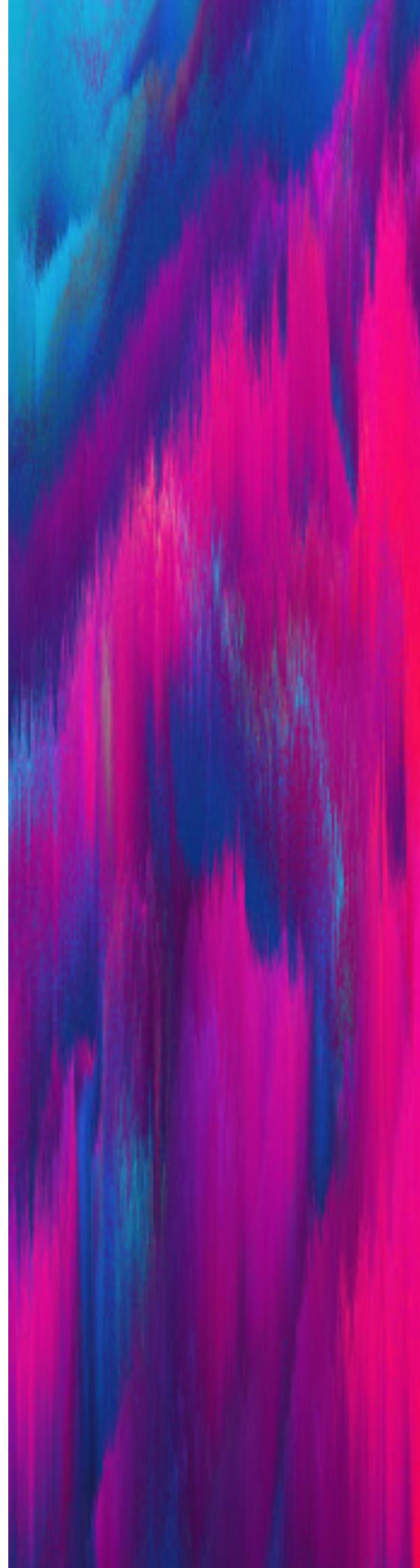
Show your clients that you care. Congratulate them on a successful project, deliver them a lunch, or send them a gift. Celebrate wins with them and show genuine interest

5 // Build your brand

Ensure you have a consistent brand voice and align yourself with practices that enhance your reputation and image. This will help you in being a trusted brand that your clients will want to engage with into the future.

6 // Offer value

Deliver free content of value to your clients. It will demonstrate that you know what you're talking about and that you genuinely care.





“Just because meeting in person isn’t an option at the moment, this isn’t a reason to stop your networking efforts altogether.”

- Talent’s Thomas MacKenzie



Nurturing client relationships: tips from an expert

Talent’s Sales and Business Development Recruitment Specialist, Thomas MacKenzie, provides his top tips for developing your business relationships during this time

// Maintain activity levels. Without face-to-face meetings, now more than ever, it’s important to keep activity levels high. Make sure you dedicate time each day, even just 30 minutes, to call your previous customers and existing client base to ask how they are going. You will gain market knowledge by doing this and it’s an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate you genuinely care. It’s also a great chance to ask for referrals.

// Show you care. Instead of taking your clients out for a lunch (which really isn’t an option at the moment), you can have a nice bottle of champagne or some food delivered to their front door. If you know they have a big event coming up, or something that warrants a celebration, you can organise delivery to

coincide with this date, accompanied by a congratulatory note. I would suggest taking the time to personalise this as much as possible. You want to demonstrate that you care, and without physically being able to meet, this is a great way to do so.

// Plan in advance. When speaking to your clients, ask to book a tentative face-to-face catch up for a few months down the track when circumstances return to “normal”. Book it in the diary so they are locked in. That way you will have a full schedule when you return to work, and can hit the ground running!

// Create structure. You should develop and maintain a structure. Keep a lead spreadsheet running that tells you who you’ve reached out to and when. You can then run follow-ups based on this data as well as get a better understanding of what is and isn’t working. Using this information, you can adjust your strategy as needed.”

In terms of expanding your network, MacKenzie has some great suggestions:

// Keep talking. “Just because meeting in person isn’t an option at the moment, this isn’t a reason to stop your networking efforts altogether. You should keep talking to people by utilising the channels available to you, whether this is through phone, social media, Zoom, email, or text. Right now, people are cooped up inside and have never been more open for a bit of variety in the people they talk to. Checking in to see how someone is managing or adapting to a new way of work is an important way to show your care for your clients and touch base. You may find the conversation goes a little bit longer now!

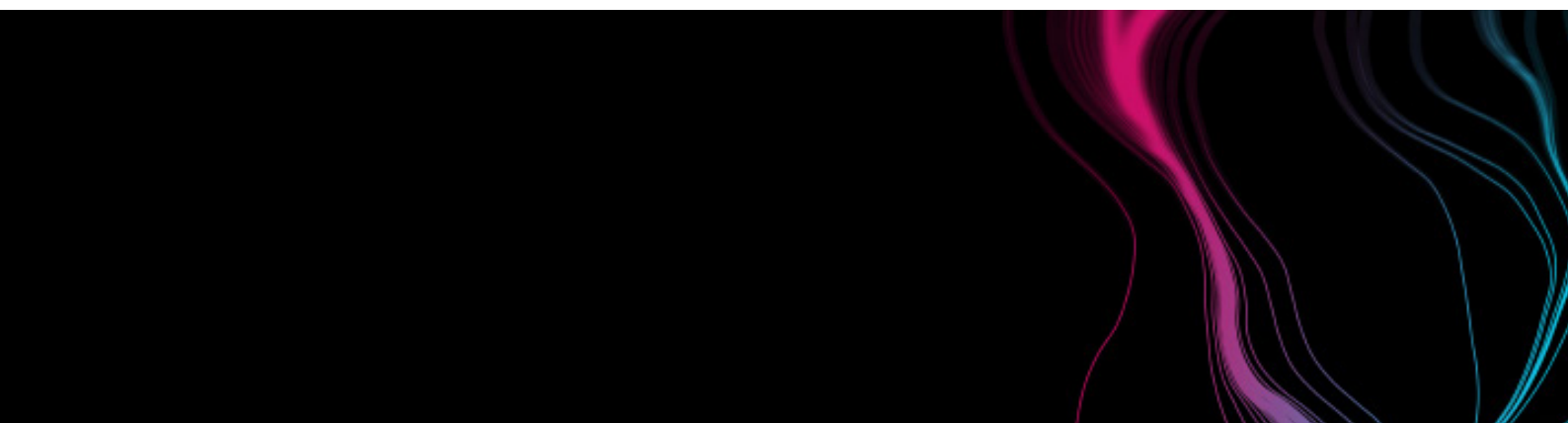
// Use your tools. Use the tools available to you to broaden your network. Lusha, for example, is a great tool you can use to obtain contact details you wouldn’t necessarily already have. Be smart about how you use this information and make sure you add it to your database. This information is invaluable and can help you to connect with people who would have otherwise been much harder to reach.

// Stay genuine. You must ensure that you are genuine in all your networking efforts. Some people are hurting right now, so it’s important not to come across as self-serving. Take a genuine interest in the people you are speaking to and they will remember you when everything returns to normal. Try and add value even if it won’t necessarily give you a win in the short term. This can involve

sharing a bit of content, best practice, market advice, a referral, etc. Whatever it is, you want to be demonstrating your support for others right now. My general rule of thumb here is it’s best to focus on “giving” rather than “getting”. You’ll be amazed at how a simple tweak in mindset can impact your output and the way you come across to others.

// Engage with content. My next suggestion is to engage with people’s content on LinkedIn. This can be as simple as asking questions or requesting they elaborate on a point in their post. **“Your engagement should be authentic and genuine”** You can even take it one step further and write your own post in response. This will help in bringing you more exposure as well as an opportunity to interact with people beyond your internal network. Remember though, your engagement should be authentic and genuine. You are interested in forging strong professional relationships, not making these connections just so you can ask for favours.

// Get in touch. Australia has a great sense of community and I have found that people are even more open to providing referrals right now. If you can see you share mutual connections with someone on LinkedIn, get your mutual connection to refer you in for that initial conversation. This is a great way to expand your network and form new relationships. This approach will also ensure you stand out amongst all the other people sending bulk InMails!”



Quick tips

// Develop a plan. Networking involves time and effort. If you want to be consistent in your approach, then it's a great idea to allocate some time during your week to nurturing and forging these connections.

// Be real & be human. Treat networking as you would making friends.

// Loosen up. Keep some of your communication light-hearted. It doesn't need to be serious all the time.

// Show your appreciation. If you value someone's work, compliment them on it. It's a great opportunity to start a conversation, plus, they will appreciate the praise.

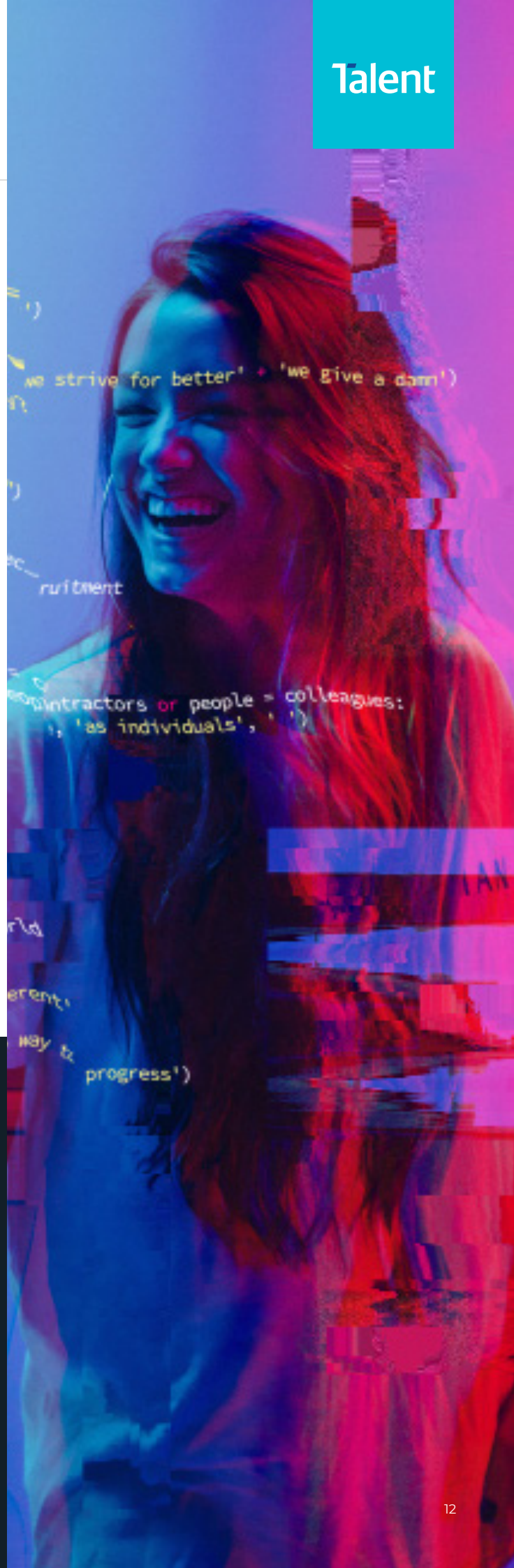
// Give and take. Don't start networking with the agenda of only getting something out of it for yourself. It's a relationship. That means you both need to provide value and support to each other.

Resources

Conferences around the world have stopped running in their physical form, but thanks to the internet, you can still attend virtually. Here are some virtual tech conferences and webinars running currently:

// Virtual Tech Conferences

// Gartner Tech Webinars



About Talent

Talent is a global technology and digital recruitment specialist. We are the largest independently-owned and operated people placement and solutions business in Australia and New Zealand, with over 300 employees.

We are on a mission to redefine recruitment by creating the most rewarding and empowering experiences for those we work with, bringing the human element to the forefront of everything we do.

We will continue to innovate with this focus and respond to the shift towards freelancers and the changing workforces of the future through Talent Engage. And through our charity Talent RISE, changing the lives of young people who have experienced barriers to employment by providing education, training, life skills and opportunities help them gain independence and purpose through employment.

LinkedIn

MOST SOCIALLY
ENGAGED
STAFFING AGENCIES

GALLUP

Exceptional Workplace
Award 2020

HRD Magazine
TOP PERFORMING
COMPANY

Diversity & Inclusion
2018, 2019

LARGE RECRUITMENT
AGENCY OF THE YEAR
SEEK, Australia 2018

MEDIUM RECRUITMENT
AGENCY OF THE YEAR
SEEK, New Zealand 2018

CORPORATE SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY AWARD
APSCo, 2018

CONTRIBUTION TO THE
NZ HI TECH SECTOR
NZ Hi-Tech Awards, 2019

```
1  import brand_vision from Talent
2
3  values = brand_vision.brand_values
4
5  if 'break from the pack' in values:
6      values.append('we lead the way' + 'we strive for better' + 'we give a damn')
7
8  Talent == 'forward thinking recruitment'
9  True
10 >>>
11
12 f = open('document_of_change.txt', "r")
13
14 def redefine_recruitment():
15     return Talent are redefining recruitment
16
17 redefine(world_of_recruitment)
18
19 def Talent_cares(people):
20     if people = candidates or people = contractors or people = colleagues:
21         print('Talent cares about', people, 'as individuals', '')
22     else:
23         return Talent_beliefs
24
25
26 for belief in Talent_beliefs:
27     print(belief)
28
29 power of potential
30 power of people
31 power of technology to change the world
32 >>>
33
34 Talent_beliefs.append('being different')
35
36 print (Talent_beliefs[3], 'is the way to progress')
37
38 Talent_is_about = ''
39 while Talent_just_recruitment:
40     Talent_is_about = people
41     Talent_is_about = change
42
43     """
44     But most importantly we
45     """
46
47 break #from the pack
```

Feel free to get in touch.

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