Developing a network

In this reading, you will be introduced to online and in-person opportunities to connect with other data analysts. This is part of how you develop professional relationships, which is very important when you are just starting out in your career.

Important note for this reading

- In-person gatherings may be restricted in your area due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Follow the guidelines of your local health officials if you decide to attend an in-person meeting. We hope in-person meetings can soon resume safely.

- Links shared in this reading are provided as examples only and are subject to change. Google doesn't sponsor or endorse them specifically.

Online connections

If you spend a few hours on social media every day you might be totally comfortable connecting with other data analysts online. But, where should you look if you don't know any data analysts?

Even if you aren't on social media and just created your LinkedIn profile yesterday, you can still use your online presence to find and network with other data analysts.

Knowing where to look is key. Here are some suggestions on where to start online:

- **Subscriptions** to newsletters like Data Elixir ↗. Not only will this give you a treasure trove of useful information on a regular basis, but you will also learn the names of data science experts who you can follow, or possibly even connect with if you have good reason to.

- **Hackathons** (competitions) like those sponsored by Kaggle ↗, one of the largest data science and machine learning communities in the world. Participating in a hackathon might not be for everyone. But after joining a community, you typically have access to forums where you can chat and connect with other data analysts.

- **Meetups**, or online meetings that are usually local to your geography. Enter a search for 'data science meetups near me' to see what results you get. There is usually a posted schedule for upcoming meetings so you can attend virtually to meet other data analysts. Find out more information about meetups happening around the world ↗.

- **Platforms** like LinkedIn and Twitter. Use a search on either platform to find data science or data analysis hashtags to follow. You can also post your own questions or articles to generate responses and build connections that way. At the time of this writing, the LinkedIn #dataanalyst hashtag had 11,842 followers, the #dataanalytics hashtag had 98,412 followers, and the #datascience hashtag had 746,945 followers. Many of the same hashtags work on Twitter and even on Instagram.

- **Webinars** may showcase a panel of speakers and are usually recorded for convenient access and playback. You can see who is on a webinar panel and follow them too. Plus, a lot of webinars are free. One interesting pick is the Tableau on Tableau webinar series ↗. Find out how Tableau has used Tableau in its internal departments.

In-person (offline) gatherings

In-person gatherings are super valuable in a digitized world. They are a great way to meet people. A lot of online relationships start from in-person gatherings and are carried on after people return home. Many organizations that sponsor annual gatherings also offer virtual meetings and resources during the rest of the year.

Here are a few suggestions to find in-person gatherings in your area:

- **Conferences** usually present innovative ideas and topics. The cost of conferences vary, and some are pricey. But lots of conferences offer discounts to students and some conferences like Women in Analytics ↗ aim to increase the number of under-represented groups in the field. Leading research and advisory companies such as Gartner ↗ also sponsor conferences for data and analytics. The KDNuggets list of meetings and online events ↗ for AI, analytics, big data, data science, and machine learning is useful.

- **Associations** or **societies** gather members to promote a field like data science. The Digital Analytics Association ↗. The KDNuggets list of societies and groups ↗ for analytics, data mining, data science, and knowledge discovery is useful.

- **User communities** and **summits** offer events for users of data analysis tools; this is a chance to learn from the best. Have you seen the Tableau community ↗?

- **Non-profit organizations** that promote the ethical use of data science and might offer events for the professional advancement of their members. The Data Science Association ↗ is one example.

Key takeaways

Your connections will help you increase your knowledge and skills. Making and keeping connections is also important to those already working in the field of data analytics. So look for online communities that promote data analysis tools or advance data science. And if available where you live, look for meetups to connect with more people face-to-face. Take advantage of both routes for the best of both worlds! It is easier to have a conversation and exchange information in-person, but the key advantage of online connections is that they aren't limited to where you live. Online communities might even connect you to an international crowd.

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