**How to Network Virtually – Model Answer**

Please note that the purpose of the model answer is to show you all the options, so it will be in more detail than was expected from you to provide. This is to give you the opportunity to reflect on your answers and add to them as required. Spend time reviewing this model answer and use it to help develop your own answer. Whilst reflecting on your answers consider the following questions: How did you choose what to include in your top ten list? Why did you leave out the others? How many of the top ten do you already do? Do any of them make you feel uncomfortable about trying? If so, why? If so, did you purposely miss them off your top ten list? What else could you do to improve your virtual networking? Have you put any of your actions in to place yet? What’s stopping you for any of them?

Please create a ‘Top Ten’ list for things to do to build your network virtually.

The below is not in any order, it is a list of things that you could have included based on the articles provided:

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| **Number** | **How to build my network virtually** |
| **1** | Create a LinkedIn profile – ensuring it is 100% complete. |
| **2** | Make sure that all my experiences are listed on my LinkedIn profile (paid or unpaid work). |
| **3** | Start building my LinkedIn network by connecting with people I know and trust. |
| **4** | When I build up my LinkedIn connections, make sure to customise my request with a personal and friendly note (possibly a reminder of how we know each other). |
| **5** | Find networks on LinkedIn that I’m already associated with or my passion and interest align to. |
| **6** | As you build connections on LinkedIn think about how I can support others (comment on other people’s status and share them). |
| **7** | Schedule time to update my status early and often on LinkedIn (stay on the radar by updating my status regularly). |
| **8** | Use LinkedIn to request informal interviews to find out more about an industry or job. |
| **9** | Before any potential networking opportunity, use LinkedIn to do research on the people I may meet, so I am prepared and know about them. |
| **10** | Ask any connections on LinkedIn for ‘recommendations’ or ‘endorsements’, as this all helps to build your professional image and will help connecting with new people. |
| **11** | Contact potential business connections that I haven’t spoken to in a while. Look for any follow up opportunities to continue the conversation with them and keep the momentum going and my name familiar. Or, just check in that they are ok. |
| **12** | Think creatively about new contacts I could add to my network – think where can I find them and then how to connect in a memorable way. |
| **13** | Request to connect with people I admire using LinkedIn (and not to get put off if they don’t all say yes). |
| **14** | ‘Find the person behind the person’ – don’t try to necessarily reach for the top person directly when I’m trying to connect, aim for someone else that is connected to the same business, but at a more junior level. |
| **15** | When I research someone, make the use of the information personal and friendly (and not creepy). I will use the personal information carefully in my approach, so they know I’ve done my research, but I haven’t stalked them. |
| **16** | Ensure I am constantly adding value to others, before expecting any one to help me. I need to think about my LinkedIn posts and how they are helping others, so I become known for my helpful and sharing approach. |
| **17** | Spend time understanding what is happening in the life of the person I want to reach out to, by what are they posting on social media (are they crazily busy or taking time out at the moment). Then I can plan the right time to contact them. |
| **18** | Keep my connecting requests (email, phone or social media) short and to the point, whilst still making them personal. Make it easy to read and easy to say ‘yes’ to. |
| **19** | Ensure I provide a clear ‘call to action’ in my connection requests. I need to be clear about what I’m asking and not vague. |
| **20** | Create a plan to connect with all the people I want to – make it step by step so I’m doing it in the right way. |
| **21** | Have a clear goal for what I want to achieve by building my network and then work back from there as to how I can achieve it. |
| **22** | Stay in contact with people already in my network – send a text, give them a call, pop them an email or arrange a virtual coffee together. Make it personal and show you care. |
| **23** | Look any face-to-face opportunities that were already in my diary and contact the organiser to see if they can be changed to virtual meetings instead. |
| **24** | Now is a great time to reach out and get a mentor, so I need to think about who I want and how I can make this happen. |
| **25** | Acknowledge that personal conversation and connections are what people are wanting at the moment, so use this in my approach and make it authentic. |
| **26** | Find an online group that offers chat session in my career field. |
| **27** | Join as many online forums as I can that will add value to my career search, but make sure I stay active on all the ones I join (so don’t overload on them – keep them manageable). |
| **28** | Attend a career path related webinar, then connect with people afterwards online. |
| **29** | Write a blog about my chosen career field and post it. |
| **30** | Provide thought leadership on topics that I’m passionate about and invite people to share their thoughts (then connect with people that do so). |

Please now write an action plan of what you personally need to do, ready to put in to action within the next five days.

The action plan will be very personal to you, as it will depend upon what you have selected as your top ten, and where you already have strengths and where you wish to develop. A big element of the success of your action plan will be how you wrote you actions or goals.

For any action plan or goal to work, it needs to be written using a SMART goal. Here is some information about SMART goals:

All goals need to contain the following elements:

***Specific***

Firstly, your goals need to be clear and provide you with a concise aim that will give you a sense of direction. If you simply set a goal to become an engineer, it won't give you enough guidance to stay motivated or focused. You need to state in clear and specific terms, what outcome, result or behaviour you want to achieve. Ask yourself the following questions:

* What is the outcome, result or behaviour I want to achieve?
* What are the possible challenges and my limitations?
* How am I going to achieve this?

For business-oriented goals, you may specify an improved level of quality, quantity or use of resources, a new/innovative result, a faster timeline, or an improved behavioural outcome that you want to achieve.

***Measurable***

In order for your goals to be effective they need to be measurable. That way you'll be able to assess your success and know whether or not you have achieved your objectives. Therefore, you should consider:

* How will I know when it is accomplished?
* What measures am I going to use to assess when I am successful? What? How much? How well?

***Achievable or Attainable***

We often have big targets and big dreams that seem impossible to accomplish. Breaking one big goal into a series of smaller ones will give you a series of joyful moments that occur once you have managed to achieve something small along the way. Your goals should be challenging yet achievable. Ask yourself:

* How can I accomplish this goal?
* How realistic is the goal?
* Do I have the sufficient resources, authority level, skills or knowledge to achieve this goal? If not, how will I obtain that?
* Does it require a stretch of effort? How willing am I to stretch?

***Relevant***

Why do you want to achieve this goal? Smaller goals should be always relevant to the broader goals you want to achieve, or the ones your company and team is striving for.

* Will it matter when it is done? Is this goal worthwhile?
* Does my goal align to the team, department and organizational target?

***Timebound***

It is unlikely that you will achieve your goals if you don't set a deadline. Every goal needs to have a time frame as well as a process for tracking phases of completion. It is imperative for time management and project management to make your goals time based. To set up time specific goals you usually need to answer one of these questions:

* When do I aim to achieve this goal?
* What is a realistic deadline?
* How can I break this down into realistic milestones or checkpoints?

Here are some **examples** of SMART goals from the ‘top ten’ list:

* By Friday I will have set up a 100% complete LinkedIn profile and will have sent out 20 connection requests.
* Complete research on Joe Bloggs before the meeting on Thursday and find out two things we have in common and the career path they have taken so far. Plan my ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ for the conversation that I will have with them.
* Find an online chat group in my professional field by Monday and comment on three posts already on there, then add my own question. Follow up with connection requests to everyone that comments on my post or reacts to my comments on other posts.