**Strategies for developing a professional network**

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Mr. Rodrego Byerly

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Dear Mr. Rodrego Byerly:

Here is the report you asked us to prepare on strategies for developing a professional network. This report includes information on the different catalysts that can be used to develop a professional network. The catalysts include networking in person, online networking, mentors, and networking with family/friends.

The findings of our report reveal important strategies professionals should pursue when networking with other professionals.

Sincerely,

Alexis D’Egidio

Project Manager

**Executive Summary**

**Problem and Purpose**

In the 21st century, means for developing professional networks has evolved from the conventional norm of engaging another individual face to face. Developing professional networks now includes networking online through social platforms, such as LinkedIn and Yammer. The purpose of this report is to help aspiring professionals, and professionals, alike understand the different catalysts and strategies one should pursue when developing a professional network.

We used qualitative and quantitative analysis of current literature published in refereed academic journal on the topic and secondary resources to complete this report. Following are the conclusions and recommendation.

**Conclusions**

**Recommendations**

**Introduction**

# **Background**

Sometimes success does not depend on high technology or enrichment in capital, but depends on individual relationship with others. Many people have achieved success and have a stable job in addition to the intelligence and the ability to work, networking also place an important role. Truly, professional networking brings numerous benefits such as individuals can share information and develop personal and professional relationship with individuals who have similar interests. Professional networking also can be vital in the procurement of jobs and sustaining professional relationships. According to SJSU-School of Information “Networking is not simply an information exchange between you and another person. It involves [establishing relationships](https://ischool.sjsu.edu/career-blog/networking-%E2%80%93-alternate-approach-%E2%80%9Cschmoozing%E2%80%9D) with people who will often become your friends and community of colleagues as you go through your career.” (P.1). It is important to take advantage of these opportunities to interact with alumni, professors, professionals, and even potential employers. Networks are built on social relationships and consist of two elements, people and relationships. However, in the 21st century, these elements must be recalculated to fit the nuances of tools, such as apps and website, available to develop a professional network. Today, communication with possible employers and friends has become digitized. These tools allow for the facilitation of a resume, personal achievements and opinions. Seeing as how technology has revolutionized our forms of not just communication, but our relationships, it is only logical that we use tools to build professional networks.

# **Method of research**

This analytical report uses the qualitative and quantitative method of research in unraveling strategies that develop a professional networking. Secondary sources of data and information on the topic are used in achieving the objectives of the report. Online website and published in refereed academic journals are used as secondary sources of information in completing this report.

**Different catalysts for developing a professional network**

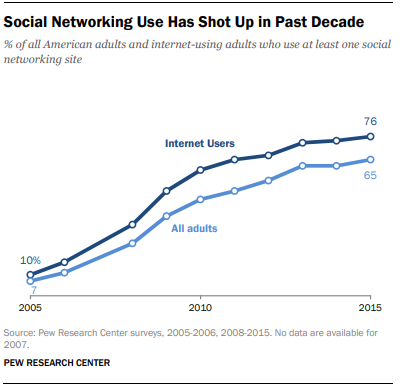
***Networking in person***

There are two spheres of networking, personal and professional. In-person networking is the conventional way of building professional relationships. This form of networking includes interacting directly with people. Face-to-face communication is the richest of communication because verbal, nonverbal, and visual messages are exchanged (Baker 2015). In-person networking can be done by meeting new people in our industry is a way to expand our networking. Attending events on campus, join in a school club, or attending community activities are the best way to build your networking in person.

There are a variety of events on campus that can help broaden your professional network. School’s often host diverse types of career building events, such as workshops and information sessions, to help students develop and become professionals. Information sessions are focused on informing students of different major related topics and professionals. For example, in the College of Business and Economics at California State University, Los Angeles, many businesses will send a representative to give a short presentation and talk about their company. Here, there is a direct opportunity to make business contacts and familiarize oneself with exchanging information. Companies also will do recruitment events that are hosted by the school and alumni. “Creating a network of developmental relationships is crucial for achieving career success.”(De Janasz and Sullivan as cited in Ansmann et al, 2014, p. 133) Although a job is not guaranteed, networking with employers and like-minded individuals, will prove to be beneficial professionally. Colleges attempt to ensure students experience networking and interacting amongst one another. Practicing conversations as well as demonstrating professionalism involves more than knowing what to say, it also involves your mannerisms and demeanor. These opportunities benefit students and allow students to add professional contacts and networks.

***Online networking***

The use of social media as a catalyst for professional networking has become increasingly important in the 21st century. According to Perrin (2015), “Nearly two-thirds of American adults (65%) use social networking site.” As society evolves, social media has become not only necessary but vital in the procurement of jobs and sustaining professional relationships. Adults of all races, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and genders are using popular social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Yammer because of the multitude of benefits it has to offer. The utilization of social media sites allows for the increased marketability of professionals by allowing individuals to share information about that themselves, which was once only accessible through conventional avenues. Social media also allows individuals to develop personal and professional relationships with individuals who have similar interests on both a national and international stage. Social media has evolved from platforms for casual communication amongst friends to sites in which professionals can access their next career.



***Mentors***

Mentorship has been the pathway to success for many professionals. Brandão and Moro (2017) define mentoring a, “providing a platform for professional networking and interaction.” Due to the insight that is provided through mentorship, it is often a highly sought-after relationship. Mentorship, in its nature, is inquisitive and valuable. Mentorship is often a part of a professional’s roadmap to their career, and increasingly, this type of relationship is being found through professional networking, whether online or traditional face to face. Mentorship and social networking’s interconnectivity, provide a clear correlation as to how these relationships continue, cyclically.

***Network with friends and family***

In terms of making new connections, being introduced by a close friend/family member is the path of least resistance because an introduction from a good friend or relative carries some weight. This networking approach has a much higher likelihood of working out in your favor because it’s understood that you wouldn’t have been introduced to that person if you weren’t qualified. From the perspective of your potential network connection, your friend/family member has already done the background check to make sure that you are a worthwhile candidate to speak to about an opportunity. Because you are recommended by a respected colleague, the potential network connection is more likely to follow-up and follow-through on their promises.

**Which strategies to pursue**

***Proper steps of networking: plan, communicate, and follow-up***

Despite the boundless benefits and awareness of networking, many feel uneasy with the concept of networking. In fact, not many know how to network effectively. While there are variety of concepts and strategies introduced about professional networking, one thing that remains constant is planning. According to Huang in his research conducted in 2016, “networking is a set of goal-directed and motivation driven behaviors.” Moreover, having an ambitious goal orientation can establish a central motivation for one to outperform others and engage in rigorous career-based networking behavior.

The second step to a successful professional networking is communicating. When building a network, one should present him/herself as concisely, factually, and positively as possible. This allows one to make a good first impression. Furthermore, appropriate usages of body language such as eye contact, and usages of active listening skills, can encourage networking to be more genuine. “Encouraging to seek others’ feedback, opinions, consultation, and collaboration and to be generous in reciprocating their time with others are soft skills that are an art when it comes to building meaningful relationships.” (Howard 2013) Before closing the conversation, be sure to get a card or contact information with a brief note to describe characteristics of a person.

The last step of networking is following up. As Goolsby said in her article, “Effective professional networking”, “the act of following up is critical in establishing and nurturing a successful professional networking” (Goolsby 2017). Rewards from networking often do not show quickly, which suggests that one must invest reasonable amount of time to maintain and nurture his/her network. One can focus on those interests and characteristics to demonstrate his/her sincerity, accountability, and caring. Moreover, if promises or offers are made during initial conversation, following through with those will help one build trust and strengthen the network. One should continue to “offer to be of service in some way” to strengthen the bridge over time (Goolsby, 2017). There might be an absence of communication due to career change or geographic relocation. While one can easily become to ignore those dormant networks, it is possible that those contacts can provide information and opportunities that your regular contacts cannot. Set up a time aside to periodically follow up with them, catch up, and “identify synergies.”

**Conclusion**

**Recommendations**

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