

How to network from home

Ellin, Abby . Chicago Tribune (Online) , Chicago: Tribune Publishing Company, LLC. Sep 19, 2020.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Maybe you were never comfortable networking at the office or striking up a conversation over a boxed lunch at a convention, but after half a year working inside your own four walls, oh, the chance to meet new people!

Pandemic or no, for people who want to accelerate learning about new subjects, strengthen career prospects or meet social goals, “networking is at the heart of finding opportunities and exploring them,” according to Miranda Kalinowski, head of global recruiting for Facebook. Fortunately, while team meetings and industry conventions have moved online, the new normal has opened as many doors as it has closed.

Expand your network

Connections can and should come from every facet of your life, including your civic, school and social groups, Kalinowski said. They can also be discovered in new settings, perhaps on the neighborhood walks you take to break up the work-from-home day. People you reach out to may be more open to connecting now, Kalinowski said, because they are no longer commuting or taking business trips, and have more time to talk.

If the people already in your network are much like you in their education, race, geography and industry, focus on diversifying, said Amy Waninger, author of “Network Beyond Bias.” It’s also OK to join groups that “are not ‘for you,’” she said. “Say you are there to listen and learn —then do that.” Women, for example, may want men at their conferences to hear about the problems they are facing, “not to tell us what to do,” she said, but so they can help fix the office environment.

Kalinowski said you could also diversify your network by aiming for more “cognitive friction” —connecting with people who have different ways of approaching problems and getting things done or have different priorities or values.

Go beyond geography

The pandemic has leveled the playing field in some ways, said Tiana S. Clark, who has worked as an Air Force intelligence analyst, public school teacher and now in Chicago as a sales director for Microsoft. People aren’t bound by location, personal obligations or financial circumstance that had prevented them from being able to attend conferences or join after-work events.

Networking from home can even offer higher-quality interactions, she said, because “you are reaching out to someone intentionally, someone you’ve done a little research on in advance, not just striking up a conversation with whoever you run into at a conference.”

There are a plethora of professional and interest-based organizations online to join. A few Kalinowski recommends are Fairy Godboss and Power to Fly, which connect women with job openings and career advice, and Stack Overflow for software developers to learn and share programming knowledge, and check out job openings. LinkedIn suggests groups and newsletters that might be of interest based on your profile and recently began displaying suggestions of “Black voices to follow and amplify” in the app’s My Network page. Many colleges have local alumni clubs now holding online meetups and lectures.

“Research some options, try one out and see if it’s helpful,” Kalinowski said. If it’s not, try another.

Introductions

The easiest and best way to meet someone is for a mutual connection to give you a warm introduction and highlight what you have in common. If you do need to reach out to someone you’ve never met, Kalinowski

recommends engaging that person through some content, like a blog post that he or she has written, to start a conversation, rather than showing up with a request.

When you do ask for something, for example information about a person's job or industry, do some research on the topic and ask for the person's opinion on what you've learned, rather than asking him or her to explain it all to you. "Don't make them do the heavy lift," Kalinowski said. And, of course, don't ask for information that is readily available on the internet.

First (online) impressions count

The way you present yourself can make the difference between receiving a response and being ignored, Clark said, so when she reaches out to someone new, she sends along what she calls a "brand narrative," a one-slide summary of who she is, her background, her personal attributes and her proudest achievements. It's a quicker and more holistic view than a résumé that focuses mainly on career, she said.

The goal is to share what you are proud of and "inspire the person to want to meet with you and get to know you better," she said. Including more aspects of yourself makes it more likely you will find something in common.

Think about what you can offer

The power dynamic can feel awkward if a higher-up is providing advice or a connection —what can you offer of value? Beyond a simple thank you, circle back and say how the advice helped you, Waninger said. If the person recommended a book, say what you learned from it. If you had a terrific conversation with someone that person put you in touch with, let him or her know. Move beyond the transactional interaction to an ongoing dialogue, she added.

Always include people whom you can be of help to in your network, Waninger said. You might connect two friends with a shared interest or scan your company's job openings for positions you can recommend to people you know might be a good fit.

Beyond one-on-one interactions

Mentors don't have to be people you meet with individually. "You can choose your mentor across time and space through a book or a podcast," and adapt that person's advice and outlook to your own circumstances, Waninger said.

Go ahead now

Start perhaps with a goal of reaching out to one new person each week, even if you feel satisfied with your existing contacts. In fact, the time to invest in your network is when you least need it, so by the time you do require assistance, you have created a strong support system.

"It's like building up your credit score so when you need a loan, you'll be able to get one," Waninger said.

Even those who are well-established in their fields should take stock. Networks can grow stale, Kalinowski said, and a "fresh take" can be invigorating.

c.2020 The New York Times Company

DETAILS

Subject:	Job openings; Careers; Books; Pandemics
Publication title:	Chicago Tribune (Online); Chicago
Publication year:	2020
Publication date:	Sep 19, 2020
Section:	Business - Careers Finance

Publisher:	Tribune Publishing Company, LLC
Place of publication:	Chicago
Country of publication:	United States, Chicago
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
Source type:	Blogs, Podcasts, & Websites
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2444088426
Document URL:	https://search.proquest.com/docview/2444088426?accountid=44910
Copyright:	Copyright Tribune Publishing Company, LLC Sep 19, 2020
Last updated:	2020-09-20
Database:	U.S. Major Dailies

Database copyright © 2020 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)