

# Let's Talk: Career networking

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Hi, I'm Kristin. Let's talk about networking. Networking is a great tool to help you advance your career, learn new skills, and even meet new people. Sometimes networking can feel a little bit forced or intimidating but it doesn't have to. Think of it as an exciting opportunity to expand your professional circle beyond just you. One is too small a number to achieve anything of significance. So take advantage of the networking opportunities that come your way. You never know what could come out of meeting someone new.

## First impressions

The truth is, is that we're all in sales and networking is a great chance for you to showcase your professional brand. Every person you meet is a potential hiring manager and an opportunity for you to demonstrate your value. So when in person have good eye contact, a firm handshake, good posture, and practice your active listening skills. The goal is to surround yourself with great people.

## Conversation starters

If you're not sure how to keep the conversation going, it can be helpful to have some questions prepared ahead of time. You can ask things like, did you start out in the field you're currently in? Why are you passionate about what you do? What is one piece of advice you wish you had gotten while you were early in career? Remember that it's important to take a genuine interest in peoples' lives.

## Take notes

Depending on the type of networking situation you're in, it can be helpful to take notes during the conversation. If it's appropriate, you can exchange business cards too. Try to write down key things like the person's name, their role, and their contact information. I also always like to write down a fun fact or a personal fact because this helps make a connection down the line. Having these pieces of information will help you if you want to reach out after the initial conversation whether it's in regards to a mentoring opportunity, a professional inquiry, or any other work related topic.

## **Communicate to stay connected**

And lastly, communicate, communicate, communicate. Relationships and networks aren't built over email and text. So be professional, be yourself, and remember the value that you bring to the table. Don't be afraid to reach out and start to cultivate these relationships. Have fun with networking. Get to know people and they will help you. People are always looking for a connection and networking is a great way have that. You never know who you might run into next. Thanks for talking.

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