

Wellington Careers and Employment Career Essentials—Networking

Networking can be done in several ways, all of which include interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional contacts, with the aim of increasing your knowledge of an industry or job, discovering opportunities for growth and development, and building your confidence and skills relevant to your desired career.



Why does networking matter?

It is estimated that up to 70 percent of job seekers will find a position through their contacts, with a much lower proportion using online vacancy sites and job boards. A well-developed network is an asset to anyone looking for suitable work, but isn't a quick fix. It's important to have a good strategy incorporating what you're wanting to achieve and how to go about it.

Networking events are often built around a professional development or training opportunity, and therefore are a chance to learn more about the latest trends in the industry you want to work in.

Types of networking

Referral-based Start by talking to your personal network of family and friends. These contacts may know people within the organisations that interest you. Make an introductory call or email to the 'key person' that your contact has suggested. Ask your contact if it's all right to use their name to create a connection. Once you have found the right person, be clear about why you are reaching out and what you would like to find out.

Informational interviewing is another form of referral-based networking that involves researching the organisation and arranging a time to meet if possible. Refer to [Career Essentials—Informational interviews](#).



Networking events include on-campus employer presentations and expos, and professional development opportunities provided by professional associations. These can often take the form of social functions.

Online networking uses digital platforms such as LinkedIn to create and maintain connections. This type of networking can be more focused and offers a better opportunity to showcase your skills. Participation in online professional learning activities such as relevant Zoom workshops is another version of this. Refer to [Career Essentials—LinkedIn](#) for further information. Check all your online profiles regularly to maintain your own positive reputation.

Networking Events

The ability to interact with others is a skill that many employers value in their staff—and therefore a worthwhile skill to develop—and can incorporate a range of objectives including job searching. While attending a networking event may seem like a daunting prospect, preparation will help.

- **Identify your networking goals**, that is, learn more about a range of careers, meet specific individuals, meet new people in a specific profession, and practise your networking skills.
- **Create a 20-second introduction**. Think about how you'll introduce yourself, what you want to say or ask, and one thing you want the other person to know. For more information, you can [Create your elevator pitch](#) via the online career centre.
- **Have two to three introductory questions ready** that would help to get a conversation started. Genuine and thoughtful open-ended questions will provide you with useful information, and allow that person to speak.
- **Make a good first impression** with suitable attire and eye contact. Initiate conversations with a handshake, introduce yourself, and use the name of the person you're meeting.
- **Aim to make any conversation two-way** by giving each person something positive. Ask questions about that person and their role, and follow up with a LinkedIn request. Collect business cards if offered them—they're useful for writing notes about that person to help you remember them.
- **Ask for referrals** from those you speak with, particularly if you are confident which field or specialisation you want to pursue (e.g., "Who else would you recommend I speak with about (specialisation)?").

Following up

- This is an essential aspect to networking that contributes to turning a single contact into someone who is part of your network. For example, if you subsequently send someone a LinkedIn connection request, always include a positive message about your discussion with them. Alternatively, send a friendly email or phone them, thanking the person for sharing their knowledge with you.
- It is worth developing a spreadsheet to record information about your new contacts, including their contact details, a record of when you met with them, perhaps who they referred you to, and even two to three personal facts about that person to refer to when you next contact them. Alternatively, you can record this information in your phone.
- If you haven't already, consider joining a relevant professional association as a means of maintaining contact with your professional network.

