

Business Research Tips is a monthly email with practical ideas for managing business information and research.

Networks and connections

When looking for reliable information quickly, a good network of connections is invaluable. They share the burden of keeping up to date with developments in your field, and they can point you in the right direction when the need arises.

As most networks, even local associations, involve an element of online information sharing, networking and connecting relies on developing an online presence and making contacts.

Regardless of whether your connections are local, global or online via a list serve or social networking site, such as LinkedIn, the following tips will help you to gain the most from your network:

- **Be informed**
Most networks will have a list-serve, forum or newsletter for sharing ideas, asking questions or alerting members to new developments. Read these alerts regularly to stay abreast of developments and achievements in your field.
- **Be helpful**
Be responsive to calls for assistance that you can help with. This is an easy way to begin to develop your reputation as a reliable and helpful source in your area of expertise.
- **Attend events**
Attend, host or speak at events organised by your network.
- **Make connections**
By attending events, or responding to queries you can create opportunities to make new connections that can grow into a personal network of reliable contacts.
- **Share your story**
Talk to your contacts to find out more about the work they are specialising in, and share your story about your areas of interest and specialist work.
- **Up to date online details**
For online networks, such as LinkedIn, make sure that your personal details reflect your current interests, and take note of the developments of LinkedIn contacts, such as a new job, or growing list of contacts.
- **Keep in touch**
Share with your connections any developments that may interest them, via your network's list-serve, newsletter or your own method of keeping in touch.
- **Give thanks**
Acknowledge the support and guidance of your network of contacts.

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