

## How to Influence People Without Losing Friends

**Social networking doesn't only happen online. Mingling at industry events is still one of the best ways to find a new job, if you follow a few rules**

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**(06-29) 04:00 PDT 06/29/08** -- When people hear the words "social networking" today, they are more than likely to think immediately of online social networking. However, while online social networking sites such as Myspace and Facebook can be a fun way of keeping in touch with people and getting your name out there, there is a lot more to social networking than sitting at a computer screen, especially if your goal is career advancement.

Whether you are looking to advance your current career or want to switch to a new career path, there are certain basic things that you should keep in mind in order to maximize the results of your networking. After all, the old saying "it's not what you know, it's who you know" may be closer to the truth than some would like to admit. And knowing how to build a network the right way could be the difference between finding your dream job and reading the "help wanted" ads.

One of the best ways to network is to attend events that attract a wide range of people from your industry. But finding the perfect social networking event won't do you any good unless you follow a few basic rules.

Make sure to dress appropriate to the occasion and act like you're at work, not at a party. If you're going to a social event where you know you're going to come into contact with a potential boss, don't show up wearing a t-shirt with an off-color slogan or drink so much that you make a fool of yourself. We know people who have done both, and it has proven to be a poor career move.

- It is important to do your homework before attending an event. Figure out who will be there and determine if it is worth your while to go. It's no good to have just a vague idea of what the event is about only to discover that it's not going to help advance your career.
- Be sure to get people's contact information, and always follow up. They have probably spoken to so many eager job seekers that there is no guarantee that they are going to remember you without a bit of prompting. A follow-up call a day or two after the event will let your contact know that you are serious and committed.
- Social networking is all about what you can give more than what you can get, so if you are outgoing and have something to offer other people, then they are more likely to want to help you out. No one wants to feel that networking is a one-way street, and calling someone only when you need a job is likely to cause resentment.
- Don't expect immediate results. Social networking is a continuing process of keeping your finger on the pulse, and a certain degree of patience is needed. So what exactly is social networking? While it may seem like an informal and haphazard process to meet new people,

it has actually been a major focus for social scientists for more than a century, and its mechanics are fairly well understood. "Social networking is really about the relationships between people and organizations, and it affects everything from air traffic control to how illnesses spread to how members of the Senate vote," says University of Buffalo sociologist George Barnett, president of the International Network for Social Network Analysis. "It's not just about looking for a job — it's the study of all social relationships and how they make a difference."

"I have met people as business associates out on the road who have become good friends," says Bay Area retail manager Eduardo Velasquez, who has more than four years experience in national traveling sales. "Because I have stayed connected to these people, I can recommend clients to them. I realize that it will be beneficial to me in the long run."

Though social networking is not all about the Internet, in this day and age many people have started Myspace or Facebook pages for their business enterprises. Just keep in mind that such sites are out there for anyone to see, whether it is a professional page or not. Potential employers will probably do a Web search on your name and you don't want them finding anything odd or unseemly.

The real key to social networking is to be engaging and interested in what others have to say. Ask questions, and don't just talk about yourself. Remember that your objective at a social networking event is to interact with a range of people and make a great impression, regardless of the situation. "In any type of business there are politics," Velasquez says. "A lot of the time you just have to bite your lip and go with the flow. All you can do is just have fun with it and don't burn any bridges."

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