

# FLASHPOINT CHICAGO

## A CAMPUS OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE HOLLYWOOD

Networking is an absolutely necessary skill — it can make all the difference in landing a job, starting your own business, or landing a new client. While networking is something that comes naturally to some people, most of us have to work at it to get better. These simple tricks can make the process easier.

### **1. Set Goals for Your Networking Efforts**

Networking can be a relatively time-consuming process. It may sound cynical to say that you need to focus your efforts on the people most likely to help you, but the truth is that you need to know what you're getting out of networking and find the opportunities that really help you the most.

### **2. Make Networking a Habit**

In order to really get the most out of your network, you need to be doing more than just going to the occasional networking event. You need to make a regular habit of reaching out to new people and connecting with them, even if you can't find that many events to attend in your area. There's always email, phone calls, and one-on-one meetings.

### **3. Think About How You're Different from Everyone Else**

Consider how you can help your connections and how you stand out from your industry. If you need to, write out a few points so that you can get some ideas for conversation topics.

### **4. Get a Better Address Book, Preferably Software-Based**

There are dozens of different address book tools out there that can do all sorts of tricks. Some can even fill in websites and other public information about a new contact based on just a few details you can add.

### **5. Always Set a Way to Follow Up**

No matter who you're networking with or what your goal is, you should make sure that you have already arranged to follow up before the conversation ends. It can be something as simple as promising to email a copy of an interesting article — you just want to skip that awkward phase of wanting to contact someone but not have a reason to do it.

### **6. Carry Business Cards with You Constantly**

With today's technology, the information on a business card isn't particularly important. But it does provide a physical reminder to your new contact that he or she did meet you, making it easier for you to build on the connection.

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## 7. Look for People You Want to Network with Ahead of Time

It's common to be able to look at the expected attendees for many events these days, and social networking can provide you added insight on who will be attending a given event with a little searching. Identify the best people to network with and make a point of introducing yourself at the event.

## 8. Make Your Connections Deeper

Just meeting someone in passing at an event (or even online) is just a shallow connection. It's a great starting point, but if you can take the time to make that connection deeper — say with meeting up for lunch or passing a few lengthy emails back and forth — you can build a much deeper relationship. It can be as simple as telling yourself that you want to make one connection deeper every week and make a point of acting on that commitment.

## 9. Listen More Than You Talk, at Least at First

A good networker spends a conversation learning as much about their new connection as possible. Ask questions, listen, and generally pay attention. Then, when you talk, you can talk about the reason for your networking within your contact's frame of reference, like what you can do to help them. This approach is much more effective than going in and trying to "sell" at a networking event.

## 10. Develop a Thick Skin

It's easy enough for a new connection to ease himself out of a conversation or turn you down during the follow up. It's important to be able to let such situations go. There are just some people who you will never click with, and that's okay.

## 11. Don't Shy Away from People Who Don't Seem Useful

You never know what the future may bring: You could change industries, strike out on your own, or generally need to know very different people down the line than you do today. Don't brush off anyone who doesn't fit in with your current networking needs just for that reason.

## 12. Go Outside of Your Industry

It's very tempting to build most of your connections within your own industry — especial - By going further, you can build a more useful network. Other potential contacts are crucial to a healthy network, even if they don't directly work in your industry.

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## **13. Connect Your Connections**

Take the time to make helpful introductions within your own network. The more interconnected your network is, the easier it is to get your contacts to take action. It doesn't hurt if you can build the reputation as the person always able to make a useful introduction.

## **14. Follow-Up Is Always Your Responsibility**

It's easy enough to go to an event and hand out a stack of business cards — but the odds are that only 10-20% of the people that you connect with will follow up with you, even if you give them a great reason to do so. If you want to create connections that will actually be useful to you in the long run, you have to take responsibility for following up.

## **15. Don't Forget Your Existing Network in Your Hurry to Add to It**

Going back and regularly strengthening your ties to your existing network — friends, family, coworkers, peers and so on — is just as important as building new connections. That's because your deepest connections are the ones most likely to help you.