

IDEAS TO HELP YOU BUILD YOUR NETWORK

1. **Join networking groups** – They have a similar aim – to share their business story and hope others are interested – attend as many networking events as possible.
2. **Many of the successful networkers start with cold calls** – Contact prosperous and influential people you know and ask for advice. Most will want to help you – they may become an advocate.
3. **Persist** – The more prospects, the more likely you will find gold. I've had many examples of when not expecting the relationship to prosper, it did. Undertake "MASSIVE ACTION" when at a dead-end or flat!
4. **Your database** – Find out their special interests and they will be impressed when next time you discuss their children, a deep-sea fishing holiday, their garden or the snow. When reaching out, have something to share.
5. **Make the meeting memorable** – They will boost their memory of you with a visual experience – perhaps a common interest. They may start doing talking about you to their network!
6. **Send emails that encourage a reply** – Increase the chance of a response when you ask how you may help them. Never act like a sales hunter – have a simple message; be friendly and proof-read your messages.
7. **Add value without expecting anything** – Try to give something without looking for a benefit. They may open-up when they realise that you trying to help!
8. **Build your database** – Add new contacts, but forget 'china eggs' and never be brassy. You lose them instantly if they feel you have them in your headlights.
9. **Be punctual for all appointments including networking sessions** – Even arrive early so you can introduce yourself to the key people. It will help calm your nerves and may provide opportunities.
10. **When it's humming** – Don't join a group and take over; listen and be brought in by them.
11. **When asked about your business** – Have a brief, punchy message; low-key, but powerful and with an economy of measured words. Rehearse your offer if you need the practise. Consider how you present yourself and what will be their memory – be polished and professional.
12. **Be prepared** – When hosting a networking event, make certain you have name-tags, business cards and brochures. It should be like a social gathering, but it is there to help business to business contacts.
13. **Get back to them soon after the event** – Within 24 hours of a networking event, follow them up; connect with your new contacts. If you got on with them well, then arrange a coffee.
14. **Be a charming guest as well** – Don't be complacent and avoid sitting by yourself – 'do the room' and don't miss opportunities. Be friendly and open and join someone alone to get to know them – takes courage.
15. **Have a goal** – Before starting, have a target number to achieve for your network – and join LinkedIn.
16. **Take lots of business cards** – They are handed out to everyone and only a few ever come to fruition, so, when talking to someone new, ask for two – one for you and another for someone else who may be interested in their business.
17. **Take notes** – Few of us have a great memory and so take notes after each chat. You will then have the details on everyone you want. A few key memory joggers will be enough i.e. their business.
18. **Follow up** – I was once offered a big contact, but thought he wasn't serious (huge company; family friend; big account). Later, he told me that I would have won the business if I had followed through – a valuable and disappointing lesson.
19. **Finally, show interest in them** – Ask a lot of questions and maybe your own experiences may help them solve their problem or issue.
20. **Enjoy the time and learn from it** – No matter how it went, you can develop your style. Recall all the good bits and the bad moments – every experience is a valuable lesson.

