

Checklist: Building a Career Network

Growing Your Network

Reach out to people you know. Tell your family, friends, neighbors and past coworkers that you're looking for a job, and share with them what interests you.

Sign up for networking events. If you're shy, attending an event that was created especially for networking might be easier since everyone else will be networking, too. Then you can take the skills you've learned there to other events, where networking isn't the main focus.

Join career-oriented social networks. Social networking sites, such as [Linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) and [brazencareerist.com](https://www.brazencareerist.com), can help you meet even more people who might help you land a job.

Impressing Potential Contacts

Practice your handshake. A firm handshake will show potential colleagues and employers that you are confident. Test with your family and friends, and they'll tell you if your handshake is too weak or too strong.

Work on your eye contact skills. Networking isn't easy, but eye contact can help people remember your name. You don't need to stare deeply into another person's eyes, but listen carefully and demonstrate genuine interest in what the person is saying.

Always project a professional online presence. If you intend to network online, always represent yourself and your work in a positive light. Use a professional email address, don't share anything online that might embarrass you later and make sure that all of your personal profiles broadcast the same message you would send to a future employer.

Helping Potential Contacts Remember You

Print a business card. By carrying a few business cards with you, you will always be prepared if an opportunity arises. The card should include your name, address, phone number, a professional email address and a link to your online work portfolio (if applicable).

Consider virtual business cards. Virtual business cards are easy to share through emails, texts and apps, and they don't clutter up a briefcase. If your career has anything to do with computers or the web, a virtual card will show that you are on top of the latest technology.

Make it easy to show your work to others. By placing your portfolio or résumé online, you'll make it easier to send out links to your work and your documents, if applicable. You can also print a QR, or "Quick Response," code on your business cards. Similar to a bar code, a QR code

helps people access your personal website or online portfolio just by scanning the code with an app on their smartphones.

Write thank-you notes. If anyone gives you helpful advice or offers to set up a meeting between you and someone who can help your career, be sure to collect his or her contact information, and send thanks. A handwritten note still makes a great impression, but a sincere email can work well if you can't find your contact's postal address.