

4 Ways to Effectively Network (and Land a Job)

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Entry-level jobs are disappearing — at least it certainly seems that way. Even those listings that claim to offer full-time positions often ask for a laundry list of previous experience that few applicants can offer. But what is the cause of this shift in approach?

Technology continues to reduce the man-hours most jobs require, freeing up time for employees to do those things that computers can't do: meeting with clients, thinking creatively, problem-solving, and collaborating with other professionals. Consequently, young professionals are now forced to perform duties that were once tied only to those with years of training and experience.

So how does a young professional land an entry-level job that isn't really entry-level? C-suite coach [Ora Shtull said](#) it best: "Change your audience. To avoid stalling on your personal path to success, extend your reach and deepen your connections both internally and externally."

Instead of scrambling to find a true entry-level position that doesn't exist, turn your efforts toward building up yourself and your network of contacts to show off the skills you already possess. Here are four ways to use networking to land your ideal career:

1. Leverage your online persona

The face of employment is changing. Once represented by the carefully crafted professional résumé, today's job seekers are represented by their [social media profiles](#) — whether they realize it or not. As social media becomes a more intrinsic part of the networking process, the line between whom you know and how you're known is disappearing.

[More than half of hiring managers](#) will look at an applicant's social media profiles, so why not use those profiles to extend your professional network? Engage with professionals not just on LinkedIn, but on other platforms as well. Talk on Twitter with influencers in your field, become an active voice on professional forums and Facebook groups, and create digital ties that could help you in the real world.

Be intentional about creating a new online presence that will attract the attention of potential employers. Connect with other professionals, spend time improving your profiles, and make sure your accounts always have your most recent contact and professional information.

2. Mingle with decision makers

Employers like to hire people who are dedicated, confident, and outgoing. Showing up at events (conferences, trainings, job fairs, etc.) that are related to your field shows dedication, especially when the event isn't mandatory — so show up! Dress well, prepare one or two questions in advance you can use to get the conversation going, and introduce yourself to everyone. Leaving a positive lasting impression can mean the difference between a "yes" or a "no" when hiring professionals are poring through a thick stack of similar résumés.

Remember: Networking itself displays confidence, which employers like. Be curious and friendly, and don't assume that just because someone isn't a potential employer, he or she isn't worth including in your network. You never know who that person might know.

3. Diversify your network

Lindsey Pollak, author of "Becoming the Boss," addresses the importance of developing a "generationally diverse" professional network. "Members of the different generations tend to think differently about issues such as work/life integration, entrepreneurship, people management, marketing, social media, and more, so a multigenerational network will inspire you to try new strategies in your career this year."

Increasing diversity outside your field is important as well. Try considering every interaction a potential professional connection. The barista at your favorite coffee shop may be an excellent photographer who would do professional photos for you in exchange for a business card design. You never know what opportunities for connection might be hiding in your everyday life.

4. Return to the classroom

Even after you've completed school, seek out opportunities to learn new skills and hone old ones. This isn't solely a matter of beefing up your resume. The people you meet in workshops and classes often have connections to local businesses in the area and can make for wonderful professional resources. These are people paid to help others prepare for their careers, and they are often eager to lend a helping hand.

The job market is challenging, but it need not be threatening. Experience is out there, and if you really want to rise to the top of the applicant pool, you can. It just takes some creativity, some dedication, and some seriously strong networking skills.