



12 Ways to Stay in Touch With Your Network

Do you have a drawer full of business cards, hundreds of LinkedIn connections and thousands of email addresses? Any one of those contacts could hold the key to your next opportunity. But you don't know which one. This means you need to find ways to stay in contact with as many as possible.

There 's a saying that "networking is not once and done." In order for you to stay top of mind, you will want to use memorable methods to show your network the value you provide and that the relationship you've build with each one of them matters.

Here are twelve twists to keep in touch with people in your network.

1. Not Your Ordinary Holiday Wishes

It seems everyone sends a holiday card in December. Don't let your greetings get lost in the crowd. Instead, send holiday cards for off-holidays, such as Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving or Groundhog Day. You could even choose a more unusual holiday, such as National Gumdrop Day or National Cat Day, as your trigger to send your holiday wishes.

2. Pay Attention to Birthdays

Social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn send reminders to make it easier to remember birthdays. However, some of your contacts may not have shared this important date on a social profile, and so this important day might slip through the cracks. Be sure to note birthdays on your calendar and send an electronic note or go a step above by sending a card through the mail. It shows you've given a little more thought and effort to remember the person's special day.

3. Create Your Own E-Newsletter

Why would you have a personal e-newsletter? Because the technology is easy, and it's good personal branding for showing your interest and skills. Your monthly or quarterly e-newsletter should be useful to your target audience. For example, if many of your key contacts are in tech marketing, share current news about new gadgets or reviews of new technology from reputable sources. Include personal updates, such as major accomplishments, ongoing education or training, events you've attended or projects you are working on.

You can send a simple email; just be sure you blind copy recipients to protect privacy. And never spam people by adding them to your mailing list without permission or the option to opt out.

4. Say Congratulations

When your contacts are mentioned or published in the news, congratulate them on the visibility. You can use Google Alerts to customize the news updates on people and companies in your network. Monitoring LinkedIn will also help you keep tabs on major milestones, like a new job.

5. Send a Token

For people in your network who have gone above and beyond what you expected, you may want to send them something more than a message. Maybe there is a book you know they'll enjoy. If you are looking for less expensive alternatives, consider a gift card to a favorite lunch spot or store. ►



There are also ideas that may seem a bit over-the-top but that might just work. If you know a connection who loves to travel, send a postcard from your next trip that says, “Wish You Were Here.” Or bring back some swag from a conference and send it along with a message about your takeaways from the event.

6. Follow Up On Rejections

Remember that job you were a runner-up for? Or that potential job lead that didn't come through? Don't give up. Send your contact a follow-up email about three months after the new hire was due to start. Sincerely express your hope that all is going well and that you are always open to future conversations.

7. Share Useful News

Sending a message that says, “just checking in!” can feel like a waste of time for you and the person receiving it. Instead, share current news or a useful hack. Perhaps there are changes in regulations or policies with the industry; why not share these with those in your network who need to know? You are already keeping track of industry trends and company news, so share it with people in your network.

8. Pick Up the Phone

Sometimes, just picking up the phone for a quick check-in can be a welcome surprise. Try calling first thing in the morning, at lunch or at the end of the day, when people are more likely to be near the phone and not in meetings. If you get voice mail, leave a short message with your name and phone number, and share a bit of interesting information.

9. Write a Recommendation

LinkedIn is the perfect platform to recommend a past colleague, service provider or client. When someone receives an unsolicited recommendation, it is a welcome surprise.

10. Connect People

Do you know two people you think would benefit from meeting each other? Be a matchmaker and introduce them. Send one email to both people and explain why you think they would benefit from meeting. Provide enough information so each person can understand the potential in the relationship and know how to research and contact one another.

11. Invite Someone to an Event

The next time you receive an invitation to an event or fundraiser, consider inviting one of your contacts to join you. Just be sure it is a cause you both support.

12. Make It Personal

Keep notes about the personal interests of the people you meet and keep in touch by referencing their hobby, travel plans, family members or life events. For example, if you met with someone and they mentioned their upcoming trip to Iceland, follow up after they return and ask about the trip. Or if you both share an interest in craft beers, send an announcement about a new microbrewery opening up. During your networking meeting, listen for these personal revelations which will help you stay connected and take your relationship to a new level. Check in with the people you've met on a quarterly basis by referencing something that is personally important to them.

Make an Action Plan

Get Organized

Create your database now. Add important information about your network contacts like birthdays, names of partners/spouses, children, college attended, organizations, interests, favorite food and so on. You can use a formal customer relationship management system, a simple Excel spreadsheet or the LinkedIn contact notes section. ►



Carve Out Time

Put reminders to send outreach and important dates on your calendar. Here are some suggestions:

Weekly: Check LinkedIn and Facebook notifications for work anniversaries and birthdays.

Monthly: Plan your outreach for the month — who do you need to touch base with and what will you do?

Annually: Evaluate the strength of your network. Have you done enough to stay in touch?

(See “Seven Techniques to Hold Yourself Accountable to Network”)