

Networking Not Your Thing? Try Connecting Instead...

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Let's face it, the way of the world is meeting people through other people. Networking outreach and relationship building, when done well, is a boundless and virtuous circle of opportunity. However, despite the fact that most of us recognise the value of networking, many of us shy away from it – maybe because it involves us stepping outside the borders of our comfort zone or because we just don't know where to start in what is seemingly, a very tough process.

Why do we put barriers of hesitancy up to connect on a professional level when in every other aspect of our lives, we enjoy meeting people? Perhaps it's time to reframe the concept of networking and make a mindset shift so that we can start to see those preconceived networking challenges as opportunities. Maybe we should even be replacing the word "networking" with the word "connecting". Do I hear you all exhale at the thought? Well.... how about, for the purpose of this article, I do exactly that?

But before we look at the "how to", let's consider the "why"? And believe me, the list of benefits for connecting is far more exhaustive than the act itself. For example:

- It builds your visibility, your credibility and quite simply, you start getting noticed.
- New doors open as you discover commonalities across various industries and functions, and you realise just how much transferable knowledge you have.
- Connecting helps you build confidence and articulate your value with clarity, precision and persuasion, creating that all-important compelling story.

About Vantage Point Advisors

Vantage Point Advisors is a career and professional development business founded on a vision of strong career well-being. Our goal is simple – we want to empower people, through skills and knowledge, to engage confidently and with purpose in their workplace.

We help individuals in the design and implementation of a unique and personal career plan. We support organisational enhancement by reframing the way teams connect, collaborate and grow.

We believe that individuals that are inspired, invested and love what they do, will naturally thrive.

We are committed to delivering unique and effective programs of exceptional quality to help our clients succeed. We know that is what our clients want, and expect.

- You gain access to new and valuable information, keeping you up to date on best practice, different business techniques and latest industry trends.

And if that isn't enough to convince you, consider these two statistics:

- ⇒ With 73% of HR and Recruitment professionals believing that 2021 is the year for internal talent mobility (the filling of internal roles by existing employees from another team, department, or function), now more than ever is the time to get to know your neighbours! (Global Trends Survey, 2020).
- ⇒ A 2019 Jobseeker Nation Survey highlighted that 50% of people actually hear about job openings from friends, while 37% hear about them through professional connections. Front of mind awareness - being that person someone thinks of when an opportunity arises – will open more doors.

So how should we connect? Here are some ideas that may help you ease into it:

1. *Choose to connect with comfort* – Redefine how you connect with others based on your values and what feels genuine and authentic to you. I can assure you the outcome will be far more positive and rewarding when you believe in the interaction. Metaphorically speaking, if speed dating is not your thing, go for a coffee or a hike instead!
2. *Connect for a shared purpose* – Relationships that are mutually beneficial offer both parties the chance to learn from and help each other, creating a win-win scenario. Conversations need to be a two-way give and take exchange, however connecting always works best when you emphasise the “give” part. Get to know people and look for ways that you might be able to facilitate their goals and visions.

3. *Plan your connection and show up* – And this means more than simply turning up on time! Before you start, think about your goals. What do you want to get from the conversation? What do you have to give? Who do you want to meet – and why? What message do you want to convey? Whilst these conversations must be authentic and genuine, make sure they are meaningful, intentional and you are 100% focused! You would never rock up to an ironman race without having prepared for the event (I hope!).
4. *Stay connected* – Now that you have started the conversation, make sure you keep in touch and foster the relationship. Send a friendly email to say, "Great to meet you!", follow up on requests or promises made, arrange an introduction of interest for them, send a (relevant) article you think they might enjoy, wish them safe travels if they are about to head away on a trip. Please do not do all this at once – it is important to gently keep the connection – but hopefully you get the idea.

Let's revisit the word “networking” again. It really isn't that scary! But you will find a key sub-word hidden within: “work”. Networking is a skill, and like all skills, it is something that is learned and developed by working at it. The key is to figure out what works best for you. And remember, “no man is an island”, and sometimes the advice and support of others is just what is required to thrive.

If you are keen to consider new and strategic, yet personally relevant networking ideas, please reach out to me at alyssa@vpadvisors.com.sg to find out more!



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