

Networking might seem daunting at first, but it is a valuable skill that can help you boost your career, says  
TERESA ROBERTSON.

# MAKING

**R**egardless of your occupation or the industry you work in, networking is an excellent way to accelerate your career. This important skill has unfortunately been perceived negatively in the past, but, when done well, it is not pushy or sales-focused.

## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking begins with the creation of a group of acquaintances and contacts. These relationships are kept active for mutual benefit through regular communication and updates.

The most important rule to remember is that networking is reciprocal. Think: “how can I help?” and not “what can I get?”.

### Networking is:

- A life skill that may require a little preparation
- Something you can do or start at any age or stage of your career
- A way to take control and be proactive
- Energising and should be enjoyable
- A likely route to success.

## BREAKING BARRIERS

Many people are intimidated by the word ‘networking’, viewing it as a daunting and difficult task, but it is something that can naturally take place without you realising it. All it takes is a simple “hello, is this seat free?” on a train to strike up a conversation and before you know it, you are talking about the weather, holiday destinations or perhaps a mutual acquaintance that you both know.

Without even realising it, you are networking. So why does thinking of it in a more formal professional context transform it into something difficult that we feel very scared of?

There are many perceived barriers to the process, but good networking doesn’t have to be this way.

### Common obstacles include:

- Fear, rejection, seems pushy
- Being outside your comfort zone
- Unnecessary
- Asking favours from friends



- Difficult, embarrassing to blow one’s own trumpet
- Belief that doing a good job is sufficient
- Misconception that networking is about selling
- Not having enough time to network
- Not sure who to connect with.

### The positive aspects and benefits of effective networking will:

- Enhance research and learning
- Help with career development
- Increase your self-marketing
- Identify non-competitive routes to jobs
- Build confidence

- Expand your circle of contacts/connections
- Acquire market data to keep you informed about competition, companies and industry
- Build relationships – both short and long term.

## OPEN THE DOOR

‘Six degrees of separation’ is the popular idea that all living things and everything else in the world are linked by just a few connections. According to the concept, a chain of “a friend of a friend” statements can connect any two people in a maximum of six steps.

# CONNECTIONS



If you wanted to get tickets to that once-in-a-lifetime concert, for example, you would immediately think of a friend or friends who you know could help you. It could be as simple as a post on Facebook that expands from one like to 250 likes through people you don't know.

Networking to further your own career aspirations is exactly the same. By reaching out to your network over a quick coffee or simple email, you could open up a whole new world of opportunities.



## PREPARATION IS KEY

Have you ever attended a conference or networking event and panicked about how to introduce yourself?

It happens to us all, but the following tips will help you to foster – and maintain – genuine relationships and connections.

- Smile
- Ask easy questions, such as “May I join you?” or “Why did you choose this event?”
- Pay attention and listen
- Set reasonable expectations. Is your goal to meet five people or one specific person?
- Have a diverse network

- Be yourself
- Don't go for a hard sell
- Prepare a positioning statement.

## REDUCE THE PRESSURE


Your positioning statement simply tells someone about you. It is also referred to as the 30-second commercial or elevator pitch.

If you have prepared your CV, the profile that you have already written is a great starting point to help with this.

**The following prompts will help you to start preparing your own statement today:**

- I am a...
- I work for/have worked for...
- My career experience/expertise is...
- My key skills/strengths are...
- A recent achievement (preferably work-based) that I am proud of is...
- I am now looking to/for...

The positioning statement is a good way to build your personal brand and market yourself and it can even be adapted for use in different situations, such as the common “tell us about yourself” question at the start of an interview.

Once you have your statement prepared, you should feel less pressure to think on the spot, and be ready to network and proactively progress your career. 

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Institute members can access a wide range of powerful networking opportunities. These include:

- Networking with peers and other professionals at our regular events throughout the country
- Access to online engagement events, such as webcasts
- Benefit from our Chartered Banker mentoring schemes and establish professional mentoring relationships.

