

Coronavirus & Your Career: How To Effectively Network During A Quarantine

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For those searching for employment or building a client base, networking is the gold standard for discovering opportunities. But with large group gatherings, daily activities and even dining in restaurants being put on hold for the foreseeable future, several natural networking environments have evaporated.

The good news is that due to modern technology, meeting in-person isn't required to develop new relationships or deepen existing ones. So, although we're all practicing some form of social distancing for the moment, here's how to maintain and grow your network while quarantined:

Make the effort. The most difficult part of actively networking right now is that the natural opportunities are all but gone. So if this was your primary source of connecting, you'll need to be more intentional about it now. Perhaps you were used to making the rounds at the office, catching up over happy hour, or shooting the breeze with your running group. Or maybe you're an avid speaker, conference participant, business traveler or co-working space member who met new contacts regularly through daily interactions. When these opportunities are shut down, it's easy to let one week, then two, then a month go by without connecting. Since we don't yet know how much time will be needed to successfully flatten the curve, don't wait. Be proactive in finding new ways to network daily such as emails, social media, webinars, online group chats or whichever technology feels most comfortable to you. This way you'll stay top of mind and be exposed to new information more readily.

Think long-term. Even if you're not in an urgent job search or your business isn't forced to curtail activities due to quarantine restrictions, **what you do now can have a major impact on what opportunities flow your way down the road.** ... If your current employment situation hasn't been impacted beyond an increase in working remotely, recognize that it may be if this quarantine lasts longer than a few weeks. This isn't meant to instill fear, but rather meant to instill *action*. Staying connected to your network, helping others where possible and building good will can only serve you well in the future.

Embrace the sense of community. Government and corporate support is growing as organizations figure out new ways to assist those who've been impacted, but since we can't know what each of our individual futures hold, waiting to see what happens isn't a prudent choice. It can be tough to take action without clear direction, but sometimes it's that action — even if it doesn't seem

directly beneficial in the moment — that opens your eyes to a new perspective or idea... If you're in a position to help others now, do it. Reach out, contribute, support, connect, or encourage. If you're in a position where you could use help, don't isolate. Let people know specifically what you need. Not everyone will be able to support you in the way that's most helpful, but they likely know of a resource or contact who can, and if not, they can do some research within their networks. Tough situations can bring out the best in communities to rally support, and most everyone I've interacted with *wants* to help and are looking for ways to do this. Give them the opportunity and you may be surprised how it deepens the relationship on both sides.

Be the glue person. Dan Pink shares a helpful tip about how you can stand out to your current (or next) employer that is *vital* right now. We need to work together to understand what our colleagues, customers, vendors and suppliers are dealing with so that we can make smart decisions about how to proceed in useful ways. If you've not had a reason to reach across departments before, this may be the perfect time to find collaboration points across functional lines. You'll both stand out to your boss and customers as a proactive problem solver and build visibility and new relationships that will be beneficial for the long-term.

Join an online forum (... maybe like CAREERSOLUTIONS) Even if you tend not to participate in online discussions or groups, more and more are increasingly popping up to share resources, offer assistance, or give suggestions on everything from urgent job openings to activities to keep your home bound children entertained. Find one that aligns with an interest and join in the discussion. This is a novel way to open your network to a new circle, which could also mean exposure to different opportunities. Watch out for misinformation. For all of the helpful resources available, there's also unfortunately a lot of nonsense that can sap your energy.

Go back in time. One area that is often overlooked when networking is dormant contacts, or those individuals with whom you've established a relationship, but have lost touch with over the years. Former colleagues, old classmates, and past neighbors can usually be easily found on social media and re-establishing a connection can be easier than creating a completely new one. Send a message and ask how they are. Ask what's happening where they live. The pandemic is a shared global experience so we're all feeling the stress in some way even if the impact to our daily lives differs. Common experiences are a great way to quickly establish or accelerate relationships and this is one that cuts across industry, level, geography, and everything else.

Consider the context. While some people may have extra time on their hands and be thrilled to connect with another human during this time of isolation, others are medical professionals on the front lines, parents trying to juggle both

working and caring for children who are not in school, or people who are unfortunately ill or caring for ill family members. If you don't get a response, don't take it personally. Each person is figuring out the best way to handle these unprecedented times, so they may not be readily available to help or respond. Move on to someone else on your list and recognize that those in a position to reply will, perhaps not as quickly as usual.

A note of caution: As everything is moving online, it's worth noting that scammers are upping their game, especially when it comes to impacted job seekers who are urgently looking for work. Do your research, look for red flags and protect yourself. It's unfortunate that others endeavor to use difficult situations to their advantage, so be diligent, get an objective opinion if things seem sketchy and trust your gut.

Note: *Since things are changing so rapidly and there's much to consider, I will be delving deeper into certain career topics impacted by the coronavirus pandemic in the weeks to come. If you're interested in following, please bookmark my Forbes page or follow me on [social media](#). Happy hunting and stay well.*



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