

# A strong network can lead to strong business performance

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The art of mingling does not come naturally for most, so it's not a mystery as to why the word networking includes the word "work". **It requires time, tact, and guts.**

From schmoozing to strategizing, the definition of networking varies from person to person, depending on their use of this important personal and professional activity. Ultimately, networking is an exchange of information, contacts, or experience. It's frequently used for getting a lead on a job, gathering intelligence, or making a sale.

Proven to be more effective than advertising and cold calling, networking is a powerful skill. But, it can be challenging even for the most extroverted personalities. If you're not used to working a room, how do you begin the process? Here are some tips to keep in mind.

**Ask yourself what your goals are.** You'll get the most out of networking when you go to an event knowing what you want to achieve and how people can help you.

**Do your homework.** If your intent is to meet someone for the purpose of obtaining a job, it's a wise idea to do your homework before speaking with them. Google them, check out their company website, and be knowledgeable about the latest industry news.

**Take the initiative to introduce yourself.** Approaching successful professionals can be intimidating. Be confident and genuine. If you feel too awkward starting a conversation, ask the host of the event to make the introductions for you.

**Follow up.** It's easy to get someone's card with the intention of getting in touch with them and then forget to do so. Be sure to contact them and express that you enjoyed meeting them and ask if you could get together sometime to exchange ideas.

**Be a network resource for others.** If you think you know someone who could benefit from meeting one of your contacts, be sure to extend an offer of introduction. They will appreciate it and might be able to return the favor.

Greater Fredericton offers a number of opportunities for using and improving your networking skills including after hours mixers, industry events, award ceremonies, trade shows, job fairs, or volunteering on a committee.

**Sometimes you don't have to leave the office to network.** Although blogging and e-mail won't replace the value of talking with someone in person, the Internet (and LinkedIn) offers a vast array of networking options that extend beyond your local geographic boundaries.

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