

# It's Not Just What You Know

by Hilary Daninirsch

The adage "It's not what you know, it's who you know" is the underlying premise behind networking.





Certainly, education and job experience matter in this competitive world, but connecting with people in a variety of industries may end up being as important as your skills and background.

Networking could mean the difference between a job won and a job lost. Networking could even give you an advantage in learning about a job that might not be posted publicly.

There are various ways in which to network, but the key message is this: Networking can only be advantageous.

Amylyn Kyler, managing director of Kyler Professional Search, a recruiting firm based in Pittsburgh, has an even broader definition of networking: Increasing power and possibility in your professional career while helping others.

Kyler said that she believes heavily in LinkedIn as an ideal networking tool and that LinkedIn can help your career in the following ways:

- Build your own personal brand
- Develop a professional network that can help you through your career
- Find a job
- Help your company market and find talent
- Help others in their career endeavors

Though some are self-explanatory, several concepts should be explored further:

### **Building Your Own Personal Brand**

Kyler said that networking is all about building your brand. Corporations are not the only entities that can have a brand; your individual brand is what defines you in your career, and anything

you can do to construct that brand is going to work for you in the long run.

“A ‘brand’ to me is what do people associate you with, what do they think of when they see your name or meet you,” Kyler said. “Your brand represents not only you, but the company you work for, and other people that you may be connected to. The influence of your brand can help you in a lot of ways no matter what stage of career you’re in or what career you’re in.”

### **Helping Others in Their Career Endeavors**

Networking is a two-way street. If your approach is solely, “What can you do for me?,” you may not get too far. However, if you can use your influence to help others, such as to make a recommendation or refer someone for a job, that can be beneficial for everyone.

One of the first questions people often ask is “What do you do?” Be ready to answer questions about where you work and what you do, or if you’re job seeking, share information about the type of job you’d like to find. Be sure to have a back-and-forth conversation by asking the same questions of others; people like to feel as if they’re being heard, so being a good listener and showing interest is important.

“When you help someone else, it ultimately helps you to build your brand because that person you helped will remember you,” said Kyler.

### **Tips for Using LinkedIn**

Though she said there is nothing like shaking hands and speaking with someone in person, Kyler is a strong proponent of using LinkedIn to its fullest.

“You can only go to so many networking events, but on Linke-

*Even if the event is not labeled a 'networking' event, you can turn it into an opportunity simply by being present and engaged.*

dIn, you can be part of up to 50 groups, so the exposure can be much greater through the Internet than anything you can get in person,” she said.

Kyler said that of the over 500 million members of LinkedIn, 85 percent are open to new opportunities. And there are multiple ways to search for jobs on the platforms.

To maximize its usefulness, consider the following:

- Make sure your profile is complete and professional.
- Connect with virtually everyone you meet on LinkedIn.
- Once or twice a week, share or post articles so that your name is coming up and your brand is being seen. These do not have to be articles that you’ve written.
- Advertise job openings at your company.
- Share promotions and awards or “wins.”
- Consider a premium membership for more robust options (including such features as “Who’s Viewed My Profile”).

## Networking Events

Joining a club or an organization is a great way to meet other like-minded individuals. Kyler said she’d advise attending an event at least bimonthly or at the very minimum, once per quarter.

To find clubs in your area, visit Meetup.com, which con-

nnects thousands of people with in broadly themed categories. Although “Career & Business” might be a good place to start, do not discount the networking opportunities you could open yourself up to if you were to join a social group, or a group that shares your love of fashion and beauty, of pets, of film, or sports, or health and wellness. The point is, the more people you meet, regardless of their affiliation, the more you expand your network of people and potential career opportunities down the road.

Besides Meetup, look into joining your local chamber of commerce or do a Google search for networking events. Even if the event is not labeled a “networking” event, you can turn it into an opportunity simply by being present and engaged. For example, consider joining a community service group and logging some volunteer hours, or join your local Junior League.

You’ll never know what opportunities lie just outside your door

unless you walk through it.

## Networking Apps

Attending in-person networking events is not for everyone. If you don’t have a lot of time or are too uncomfortable at the thought of engaging in conversations with strangers, there are other “behind the scenes” ways to network. Still, some of these involve meeting people in person eventually, but bear in mind that connecting with someone in person is always preferable and allows you an opportunity to showcase the real you.

Here are two of the lesser-known networking apps:

- **Shapr:** Based on personal information you enter into the app, Shapr relies on an algorithm to make daily recommendations of people you would likely match with professionally—think of it as Tinder for business purposes. If there is a mutual interest in meeting in person, the rest is up to the users to make it happen.
- **Bumble Bizz:** Bumble Bizz is an offshoot of dating app Bumble. In the female-centric networking app, women make the first move to initiate professional connections.

## Bottom Line

For networking to be truly beneficial, you will need to make yourself visible and open yourself up to meeting new people, both in person and online. Networking is bound to increase your confidence, and bringing that confidence to your current job or to a new employer is a major key to success in any industry.

### About the author:

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