

CONNECTING FOR THE FUTURE

THE ART OF VIRTUAL NETWORKING

**Pivoting from Traditional to
Virtual Business Networking**

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SHIFTING CONNECTIONS

This information is designed to help you transition from in-person networking forums to virtual networking forums. The fundamentals are simple, leveraging existing platforms to make this happen. The focus will be on business networking/connecting.

One thing the pandemic taught us was to "pivot" and rethink everything, including how we connect with others. Now, we are in the land of Zoom, WebEx, Teams, Google Meet and other platforms that have literally taken over our lives.

If you were like me pre-pandemic, I considered myself to be a professional networker/connector, and made sure I stayed abreast on professional and social networks, plus attended events. Perhaps you were or are introverted and the virtual space is more comfortable. In either case, this will help you focus on HOW to enhance your virtual networking skills. Here are some things to consider for keeping, building and enhancing your current network.

1. Who do you know?

- a. **There are 2 main buckets of connections, professional and social.** If you already have these established, start by reaching out on social media (FB, IG, Twitter, and LinkedIn, etc). Focus on the professional connections.
- b. **Leverage professional/organization networks.** If you are a member of any professional organizations, that's an automatic network. If you aren't involved, I strongly advise you to seek out those in your profession. If you don't already have a LinkedIn account, sign up for one ASAP!

2. Check event platform/calendar information.

- a. **Most group/organizations are still having virtual meetings/platforms.** Once things "open up", there will still be a need for virtual platforms. I believe it will be a part of what we do. Align your calendar with these events.
- b. **Utilize checking LinkedIn, Google Meets, Eventbrite and other virtual event platforms to see what interests you.**

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3. What is your why? What's in for you and the people to whom you will connect?

- a. ***You should be intentional and strategic about the people/groups you connect/network with.*** Network with a purpose.
- b. ***Just like in an "in-person" setting, making a virtual connection is easy, yet strategize key people to connect.*** Assess if the connection will be a "value add" to your network.
- c. ***Make quality connections. It's not about how many people are in your network.*** It's about having the "right" people in your network. Invest time in the process of selecting the people and groups to engage.

4. Networking is relational, meaning two-way. What is the goal or purpose reaching out to the person or if in a group setting, what information can you provide?

- a. ***LinkedIn makes it easy to connect with those who have shared interest or work for the same organization.***

5. Initiate virtual meetings and chats.

- a. ***Most folks have a free 10-15 minutes available in their day to virtual chat to "catch up" or touch base.*** Always, be mindful/respectful of people's time.
- b. ***If it's someone new you want to meet, ask a mutual connection to do a "soft intro" for you.***

These 5 tips will help you in developing virtual networks that will continue to grow.

Additional Resources: How to Build a LinkedIn Profile

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ffdgZFyjUk>