

10 NETWORKING TIPS

for Construction Professionals



Let's face it, making that initial introduction can be intimidating to a lot of people.

Introducing yourself to build relationships and network is just as important in the construction industry as any other—perhaps even more. Many construction jobs are won based on relationships and previous experience.

The first step to building a relationship is making a connection, which can happen all the time, and in all places. You need to be ready to take advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself. Follow these tips to ensure you will be when the time is right.



BE OPEN & PREPARED

Look for opportunities to meet people whenever possible—you never know who your next customer might be or where your next project might come from. Networking opportunities can happen anywhere at any time, from waiting in line at the store to your kid's soccer game. Whether you are on or off the jobsite, always be ready to make new contacts.



PREP YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Having a prepared speech that explains what your organization does, clearly and succinctly, offers you a powerful opportunity to present yourself to potential customers. The right elevator pitch will make people want to know more about you and your company and should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 10 to 20 seconds, hence the name.

Explain your company's major focus, emphasizing why your company excels at what it does and the primary benefit to your customers. Have a follow-up question at the ready if there's an opportunity to continue the conversation.

10 Networking Tips for Construction Professionals *(continued)*



JOIN A PROFESSIONAL TRADE ASSOCIATION

We are all busy. The thought of adding one more activity to our already packed calendars seems unbearable. However, joining a trade association offers numerous benefits with many opportunities to connect with peers and explore new business prospects.



MAKE THE MOST OF TRADE SHOWS

Prepare. Network. Follow up. These are the steps to a successful trade show and getting the most out of your investment. Know who will be there and target who you want to meet. Research prior to the show so you are armed with plenty of knowledge to make memorable conversations and connections.

Let your current customers know you will be there and invite them. After the tradeshow, collect all the business cards and connections you made. Follow up with everyone, however, if there are specific contacts you feel you could provide a value to, reach out with a more personalized message and start building that relationship.



PRO TIP

HOLD YOUR DRINK IN YOUR LEFT HAND TO LEAVE YOUR RIGHT HAND FREE AND DRY TO SHAKE HANDS.



HAVE BUSINESS CARDS ON YOU—ALWAYS

Be sure when you hand out your business card that it is up to date with all current contact information. Your card can be one of the most inexpensive yet powerful networking tools in your marketing arsenal, so be sure to have plenty with you wherever you go. Make it a point to collect business cards from your new contacts. Write notes about each person and your interaction on the card itself, and include cues about what you talked about that might help you follow up with an email or a phone call later.



NETWORKING AT WORK

The workplace is a valuable resource for contacts and connections. Take the time to walk around and meet some of the people working with you as well as people outside your department or division. This is a natural place to develop relationships, which will make your job easier—whether it's an opportunity to learn something new or gain a trusted colleague. Plus, you never know who knows the person you want to know. Another great way to network through work is to take part of a mentorship program where you can develop new talents and hone leadership skills.

10 Networking Tips for Construction Professionals *(continued)*



CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

LinkedIn® is a great opportunity to highlight yourself, your experience as well as your company. Connect with people who you have worked with in the past and those you want to work with in the future. If you know ahead of time who you want to meet, LinkedIn® is a great resource to research that person's background, company and shared interests.

Be sure to have a well-thought-out, current profile including a photo. People like to put a face to a name. Join industry-specific LinkedIn® groups and get involved with discussions. If your company doesn't have a company profile, make creating one a priority. Facebook® and Twitter® offer similar opportunities to engage and build a strong network within your industry. Contribute to discussions and engage industry influencers.



DON'T BURN BRIDGES

Keep in contact and maintain good relationships with former employers, coworkers and subcontractors that you've worked with in the past. You might need to use them as a reference or to pull them into a future job. And you never know if the job you submitted a bid for has ties to a previous colleague.



REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE

True networking means each party delivers value to the other. Instead of talking first and foremost about your business, take the time to learn about them and their business. Your main goal should be helping your new contact instead of focusing on how they can help you. When you follow up, focus on the value you bring—the solutions, the knowledge, the connections. Become the “go-to guy.” If you commit yourself to helping others, people will want to help you in return.



FOLLOW UP

Following up is probably the single most important aspect of networking, and often forgotten. Enter the business cards you collected into your database. Send a quick email, but don't make it a sales pitch. Concentrate on building a relationship and offering value. Connect with people you meet on LinkedIn®, Facebook® and Twitter®. In addition to following up with people you recently met, don't forget to follow up with the people you already know. Those are established relationships that need just as much cultivating as new ones.

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