

Relationships That Move Careers

30-Day Networking Toolkit

Choose one section.

Take one action this week.

Language to use

Questions to ask

A 30-day plan to follow

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Principles Behind Every Strong Relationship



Authenticity

Be specific about who you are and what you care about.



Reciprocity

Keep the exchange two-way, over time.



Contribution

Offer value first, however small.

Start Where You Are

Early career

- **You do not need** a large network to begin.
- **Ask for advice** rather than a job, follow up within days, and share what you did with their advice.
- **Fresh perspective** and current training are real contributions.

Established professional

- **Expand your network** and build relationships beyond your sector.
- **Share what you know** through speaking engagements, boards and advisory committees.
- **Reconnect and give back** by renewing past relationships, making introductions, and mentoring in both directions.

Reflect: Which principle do you practice best, and which needs more attention?

Map Your Circle

A strong network holds four kinds of people.

Name one person for each role, write your next step, and treat any gap as useful information: choose one role to strengthen in the next 30 days.

Role	What they do	Who is it, or who could it be?	Last contact	Next step
Mentor	Offers guidance and honest feedback			
Sponsor	Advocates for you in rooms you are not in			
Peer	Learns alongside you and shares what works			
Connector	Introduces you to people and communities you do not yet know			

Your 30-Second Introduction

A good introduction answers three questions: who you are, what you are working on, and what you are curious about.

The last line is what turns an introduction into a conversation.

*I'm a [role] at [organization],
focused on [issue]. Right now I'm
working on [project], and I'm
curious about [topic].*

Sample

"I'm a program manager at a county health department, focused on maternal health. Right now I'm leading a postpartum outreach pilot, and I'm curious about how people move from program work into policy."

*I lead [team] at [organization],
where we focus on [issue]. We're
currently working on [project],
and I'd love to hear how others
are approaching [topic].*

Sample

"I lead a small epidemiology team at a state health department, where we focus on chronic disease prevention. We're currently building a data dashboard for rural counties, and I'd love to hear how others are using data to reach communities with limited access to care."

Networking at Conferences

Conferences are your best practice ground.

Use these tips during sessions, at the exhibit hall, or online if you are joining virtually.

In person

- **Start easy:** ask “What brought you to this session?” or “What has been your favorite session so far?”
- **Use your introduction:** give your 30-second version, then ask the question at its end.
- **Exit gracefully:** say “I’ve enjoyed this. May I connect with you on LinkedIn?” and then move on.
- **Capture it right away:** note a name and one specific detail on your phone or a card within minutes.
- **Follow up within 48 hours:** send a short message that mentions something from your conversation.

Joining virtually

- **Join in the chat:** add a specific comment or question during a session, and share a useful resource.
- **Introduce yourself:** post your name, role, and one line about what you hope to learn.
- **Use small-group rooms and discussion boards** when offered. Turn on your camera if you are comfortable, and share your 30-second introduction.
- **Message speakers and attendees afterward:** mention something specific from their talk or comment, and personalize your LinkedIn connection note.
- **Follow up within 48 hours,** just as you would in person.

If networking feels draining: aim for two or three real conversations rather than twenty quick ones. One-on-one talks are often easier than groups, so try arriving early or standing near the edges of a room.

Copy-and-Send Scripts

These six messages cover most networking moments.

A specific message is easier to answer, and easier to say yes to, than a vague one.

Reconnect with someone from your past (college, a former employer)

Hi [Name], it has been a while since [shared place or role]. I still think about [specific memory]. I'm exploring [goal], and I would value twenty minutes to hear how you moved into [their work]. No pressure if timing is tight.

Request a short conversation (executive, senior leader, or someone whose path you admire)

Hi [Name], I admire your path from [A] to [B]. I'm at a point where I'm deciding [specific decision]. Could I have twenty minutes to ask you two questions about how you approached it? I'm happy to work around your schedule.

Ask for an introduction (to a parent's colleague, a neighbor, a family friend, etc.)

Hi [Name], I'm looking for a [role or kind of person] in [setting]. I noticed you know [person or organization]. Would you be comfortable introducing me? I've written a short note below that you can forward as is, and there is no pressure if it does not feel right.

Forwardable introduction (send this with the request above)

I'd like to introduce [Your name], a [role] focused on [issue] who is exploring [goal]. They would value a brief conversation about [topic]. I think you would enjoy meeting.

Thank and follow up (within a few days of any conversation)

Thank you for your time on [day]. Your advice about [specific point] was helpful, and I [what you did or will do with it]. I'll let you know how it goes. If I can ever be useful to you, please tell me.

If you do not hear back (after about 1-2 weeks)

Hi [Name], I wanted to follow up on my earlier note. I know schedules fill up, so please do not worry if now is not the right time. If it is easier, I can send my two questions by email instead.

Choose your channel

Email	First contact and requests that need detail
LinkedIn message	Reconnecting and following up after an event
Text message	Warm contacts you already text; keep it brief
Call or in person	Thank-yous, sensitive asks, and building trust

Silence usually means busy, not no. One gentle follow-up is fine. If you still hear nothing, let it go kindly and stay open to reconnecting later.

Conversation Starters

Good questions make conversations memorable and show you did your homework. Pick two or three, and **listen more than you talk**.

Who	Try asking
Executive and Senior Leaders	What did you wish you had known at my stage? What decision shaped your path the most?
Mentors	What do you see in my work that I might be missing? What would you do in my position?
Potential Sponsors	What would make someone ready for the next level here? Where could my work be more visible?
Peers	What are you learning right now? What is one thing that has worked for you?
Connectors	Which organizations or communities would you recommend I get to know? Who in your network should I meet?
Anyone	Who else would you suggest I talk to?

Before your next conversation, choose two or three questions to ask.

Become Sponsor-Ready

A **sponsor advocates** for you when you are not in the room, and they do it once they have seen your results and trust you. **These moves** make that more likely.



Deliver visible results, and make sure the right people see them.



Say where you want to go next to your mentors and leaders.



Raise your hand for a stretch project or a cross-team effort.



Ask what would make you ready for the next level, then act on the answer.



Keep your sponsor informed so they can speak about you with specifics.



Sponsor someone else. It builds your reputation and your habits.

Do not ask a new acquaintance to be your sponsor. *Build the relationship first, and let the trust come from the work.*

Lead with Generosity

Trust builds long before you ask for anything.

Share an article with a note on why it made you think of them.

Make an introduction that helps both people.

Congratulate a promotion, publication, or milestone.

Offer a skill or an hour of your time.

Credit someone publicly for their work.

Share what you learned from a conversation with the person who helped you.

Your 30-Day Plan

Small, consistent actions build a network faster than occasional bursts of effort.

- ☐ **Week 1:** Fill in your circle map and write your 30-second introduction.
- ☐ **Week 2:** Send one reconnect message to someone from your past.
- ☐ **Week 3:** Request one twenty-minute conversation, or ask for one introduction.
- ☐ **Week 4:** Send thank-you notes, share one useful resource with someone, and update a mentor on your progress.

After the first month, keep a steady, consistent cadence:

- **Reach out** to three people each month with no ask attached
- **Share your appreciation** after every conversation
- **Update your mentors and sponsors** twice a year

Conversation Tracker

A simple record keeps relationships warm and makes follow-up easy.

Name	Role in my circle	Date we spoke	What we discussed	Promised follow-up	Next touch

Keep the Momentum

- **Relationships are built** in small, consistent moments.
- **Choose one action** from your 30-day plan, take it this week, and let each conversation lead to the next.
- **Share this toolkit** with a colleague, a mentee, or anyone expanding their career.

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