



# How to Intelligently Network Online

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Online Networking is about getting involved and getting your name out every chance you get. Similar to meeting new people in person, it can be hit or miss. The single most powerful advantage of online networking is finding new connections you didn't know you already had and expanding your "sphere of influence." It takes time and energy to build a network, either in person or online. The difference is that with the Internet we have the ability to reach more people in a smaller span of time, making us better, more effective networkers, and as recruiters we live and die by our networks.

Connecting via email is an incredible leverage that will prove invaluable in generating leads. Online connections have many unexpected positive results which grow exponentially. Master this and you will simultaneously win friends and influence people by the thousands. Like conversation, email is an art form. Doing it correctly will raise your status among your target audience and get the word out on your business better than any other tool to date. Unlike a one-on-one conversation, email has the distinct advantage that it can act as a megaphone, extending the reach of your marketing message.

Don't be misled, it's not easy and it will involve plenty of your time and energy. It may even require you to offer some of your knowledge and experience to strangers. You will also have to master discretion because that same megaphone effect which multiplies your range applies tenfold when it comes to making mistakes "in writing" which can circle the world in mere nanoseconds. In the long run, your contributions will make you a star. They will bring you up to the global stage and you will come out looking like an expert in your field.

The following are the five principal philosophies you will need to incorporate into your daily life in order to become a "Networked CyberSleuth."

#### 1. Email Often

The principal tool of the CyberSleuth and true Netizen, email is the central part of online life. Make it a goal to initiate contact with at least three new people each working day. This way you have a very strong possibility that one of those attempts will result in a fruitful connection with a new contact that may bring an entirely new sphere of influence into your network.

Don't be afraid to reach out and initiate contact via email. This is not the time to be shy or overly cautious. One way or another you have to get out there and make new contacts to keep your competitive edge. With the fast pace of modern business, there's simply not enough time to do all of it on the phone and much less in person. Even the most fortified business relationships started with the simple planting of a seed. It stands to reason, then, that if you automate your planting then your harvest will grow.

There's no need to abandon the phone, but email is an extremely effective partner. Sending out an initial email introduction allows you to give some more detail and context upfront than what is allowed in a quick introductory call. Follow your email with a quick "hello" voicemail the next day. By merging the virtual world (email) with the real world (phone) you have doubled your chances of getting a response. Follow up your voicemail with a quick confirmation email, and you have tripled your chances.

#### 2. Reply Quickly

You should be answering all of your email within 24 to 48 hours to show you're on the ball and taking care of business. Nothing turns people off faster than your lack of

attention. Particularly if you were the one who initiated the conversation and subsequently "dropped the ball."

Stay on it no matter what requests come in. Take the time to personally answer each and every one even if it's just to say a kind "thank you" or "I can't help you with this right now, but I'll get back to you." It's very easy to keep templates or standard responses in MS Word documents, signature files or your draft folder and refer to those for a time saving copy-and-paste.

### 3. Stay in Touch

A brief hello or follow up message every once in a while to people you have helped in the past also generates heaps of goodwill and helps fertilize the friendship. You easily keep track of your email friends using a service like Zoominfo's JobCast. Include all the people you have helped or with whom you would like to keep in touch. Then once in a while send them a message with news about you, your area of expertise, the hot jobs you have open, or just some holiday wishes. Any one of those emails could turn into an alliance or someone who may be willing to do you a favor down the road. At the very least, they are more likely to remember you. They may even check out your website and eventually become a candidate. This isn't spam, its just old fashioned "keeping in touch."

### 4. Automate

Does it take time to go through that much mail? Yes. But, it's the best way to spend the time it takes to drink that first cup of coffee and get in gear to begin the day. It's absolutely time well spent. Of course, you can cheat by using email filters and inbox administration functions to eliminate the unwanted and manage the rest, leaving you only with the need to personalize a few responses and handle the items that require more attention.

Most popular email programs like Outlook, Lotus Notes and Eudora have the ability to set up rules to process your incoming mail. You can do things like look for particular words you put in your outbound subject line and move

those messages into special folders, change the color of the message, flag them for a future action, forward them somewhere, or even automatically respond to them. Read the help menu in your email program for information on setting up email processing rules.

It's also useful to set up recurring timers to remind you of routine tasks like sending out your three new emails per day, initiating an email campaign, or responding to emails in a particular folder.

### 5. Use your Signature File

At the end of every email you have the opportunity to make a marketing statement. In that place you should clearly state the best ways to get in touch with you. Here you should list your main number, your instant messenger accounts and your website. It's also wise to throw in a link to your online bio, ZoomInfo page, LinkedIn profile and Plaxo account. People interested in finding out a bit more about you will not have to look far, and they will be more likely to network with you once they know more about you. Such personal information fills the gap left behind since you are not meeting in person. You can even change your signature file to update people on your current projects, recent accomplishments, blog posts, company news, or just have a rotating quote of the day.

Online Networking means getting involved and getting your name out every chance you get. Don't be afraid to participate in online discussions and forums, join groups and send out emails asking your friends for help. Communicate often, stay on top of your email, learn to automate your tasks, and above all, take risks and initiate contact. Just like with cold calling, the worst that can happen is people just decline your invitation to connect. But the best thing that can happen is you will discover dozens or even hundreds of long-term relationships that will provide you the kind of opportunities of which others can only dream.

Now get out there and email somebody!