



GUIDE

Networking for newcomers to Canada

Table of Content

- Overview** 03
- What is networking?** 05
- Why is networking important for newcomers?** 06
- Where can you build your network in Canada** 11
- How to network effectively as a newcomer** 22
- Summary** 36
- Key Takeaways** 37
- Disclaimer** 39
- Sources** 40



Overview

Networking is an essential part of Canadian culture. No matter where you are in your professional journey, you'll need a strong network to support and guide you throughout your career in Canada.

As a newcomer, your professional network will be one of your most valuable assets in the Canadian job market. Besides helping you find your first job in Canada, networking will give you an opportunity to understand the employment landscape, plan your career path based on insights from other professionals, and identify mentors who can guide you and offer moral support during your job search.

However, networking does not come naturally to everyone: there are several skills that you may need to develop and best practices you'll need to follow to build strong, lasting professional connections.

“ **No matter where you are in your professional journey, you'll need a strong network to support and guide you throughout your career.** ”

Here's a brief overview of the key topics you'll find in this guide:

Introduction to networking

Learn what networking means in the professional context.

Importance of networking as a newcomer in Canada

Understand why networking is essential for your professional success in Canada, regardless of whether you're waiting to get your first job or are already established in your career.

Networking platforms and tools:

Understand the pros and cons of in-person and virtual networking and learn about the various networking platforms and channels you can leverage to build connections.

Networking tips and best practices

Learn ways to improve your networking skills and get proven tips to help you network better both in-person and virtually.

As a newcomer, building a professional network from scratch can take time and effort. This guide will equip you with basic knowledge on why networking is important, and where and how to start networking. Whether you are looking for your first job, exploring alternative career path, or moving into a new role, this guide will help you build strong, lasting professional connections to further your career in Canada.



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What is networking?

Networking is an activity where you seek to build professional relationships with people who can support you and whom you can support in turn. Whether you're looking for employment in Canada or are already established in your field of work, networking allows you to meet and form contacts with other people in your chosen industry or area of expertise.

The goal of networking is to create connections (i.e., groups of people in your life) that you can turn to for information and career advice, or to ask for or provide access to further connections, job opportunities or other professional favours. As with any social network, you'll need to carefully nurture these relationships over time to build trust and establish yourself as a reliable, valuable professional who can add value to other people's lives.



Why is networking important for newcomers?

As you start to familiarize yourself with the professional culture in Canada, you will realize that networking is essential not just to get your first job as a newcomer, but also for your continued professional success. Here are some of the advantages of building a strong professional network in Canada:

1

Opportunity to tap into the hidden job market

In Canada, between 65 to 85 per cent of job positions are never publicly advertised. Instead, they are filled through the recruiter's network: this is called the "hidden job market". As a newcomer,

building a strong network can help you tap into this hidden job market. If handled well, a 20-minute introductory interaction or informational interview can initiate a relationship that may lead to a future career opportunity.

When you network with people in organizations you'd like to work for, you can position yourself as a potential candidate by showcasing the value you bring and your willingness to build on your skills. Don't ask for a job, but instead let people know the skills, expertise, and enthusiasm you bring to the table. Leaving a positive impression might give you an edge over other candidates when a suitable role becomes available in the company.

Oftentimes, when a manager needs to fill a position on their team, their first step will be to ask their own network, including coworkers, if they might know a person who would be a fit for the role. If you've made a favourable impression with someone in that manager's network, you increase your chances of getting invited for an interview.

Even if the person you meet isn't a hiring manager or there are no open roles in their organization, they might be willing to give you a recommendation for other job opportunities or on your [LinkedIn](#) profile.

Be sure to put your best foot forward in every networking meeting, no matter how informal. Remember new positions open up in organizations every day and the people you meet today might be the key to your next role.

“ If handled well, a 20-minute introductory interaction or informational interview can initiate a relationship that may lead to a future career opportunity. ”



Build and promote your personal brand

Your personal brand is what people think and say about you based on the impression you make. Just like businesses create brands for their products, you can carefully create your personal brand by highlighting your unique strengths, skills, interests, and personality traits when you network with people. Remember, this is a chance to tell your story in a way that is consistent, compelling, and memorable.

Building your personal brand will be an ongoing activity. Start by thinking about what makes you stand out as a professional and what you can bring to the table. Networking gives you a unique opportunity to refine and fine-tune your personal brand, based on the feedback and reaction of experienced professionals.

By clearly communicating your value and leaving a positive impression, you can stand out as a potential candidate and increase your “brand recall.” This makes it more likely for people to recommend you to their contacts or refer you for any relevant positions in their network.



Tip: Align your elevator pitch, LinkedIn profile, and other personal branding material (blog, website, LinkedIn posts, etc.) with your personal brand.



3

Learn from other people's professional success in Canada

Once you start growing and nurturing your professional network, you will be exposed to professionals at different stages of their careers. As a newcomer to Canada, you can use this opportunity to learn how recent industry entrants got their foot in the door and how senior professionals have grown in their industry.

Networking allows you to learn from other people's successes and failures, so you can be better prepared for your own professional journey. For instance, while talking to senior professionals in your area of expertise, ask questions about their career path and alternative paths that may exist. If you are looking for your first job in Canada, you can network with established newcomers to understand what helped them get started in their career in Canada.

Asking the right questions will help you get a better picture of the challenges you might face, things you could do differently to progress in your career, or transferable skills you'll need for a successful switch to a different field of work.

Find a mentor in Canada

A mentor is an experienced or skilled professional who acts as a role model and helps you (the mentee) enhance your skills for professional success. A good mentor can help you adapt your skills to the Canadian job market and can act as a guide to the local work environment.

As a newcomer, you can leverage your network to find a mentor in Canada. You can use networking sites like [LinkedIn](#) or [Ten Thousand Coffees](#) to identify industry experts or senior professionals who are willing to provide career guidance or mentorship to newcomers. Networking events, industry associations, and government-funded settlement or professional organizations are also good places to look for a mentor.

Finding the right mentor may take time, but by nurturing your connections, you should be able to find someone who understands where you are in your career journey and is willing to help you prepare for professional success in Canada.

A mentor can also introduce you to their own network, opening up a whole new universe of potential professional connections for you to tap into.

Government-funded services that provide mentorship support:

[Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia \(ISANS\)](#)

[Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council \(CRIEC\)](#)

[Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council \(TRIEC\)](#)

[Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council \(ERIEC\)](#)

[Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization \(OCISO\)](#)

[Skills for Change](#)

[CultureLink](#)



Where can you build your network in Canada?

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way people network in Canada. While previously, networking was primarily done in person, virtual networking has now become a popular method of building new connections in Canada. Even as things begin to go back to normal, a hybrid model of networking—part in-person and part virtual—will likely become the norm.

Advantages of virtual networking

- 1 Start building your Canadian network before you land**

With virtual networking, newcomers have the opportunity to start building their network well in advance of their arrival in Canada. You can start attending virtual networking events or meeting people for online coffee chats while preparing for your move.
- 2 Opportunity to look beyond your city**

Virtual networking allows you to connect with experts or professionals, regardless of where they live. If you're still preparing for your arrival, this gives you a chance to speak to people in different cities and figure out where the best job opportunities are for your industry in Canada.
- 3 The convenience of networking from home**

By networking virtually, you save the time it would take you to travel to the meeting place. This means that you can accommodate more coffee chats in a day and build your network faster. Virtual meetings may also be more convenient for the professionals you meet, so your acceptance rate for virtual coffee chats may be higher than for in-person meetings.
- 4 Easier to follow up and stay in touch**

It's much easier to stay connected and engage virtually over follow up coffee chats, emails, or social media. This will allow you to follow up more often and build stronger, more meaningful connections.

Advantages of in-person networking

- 1 Opportunity to meet more people at events**

Networking events bring hundreds of professionals together in one place. These events provide a great opportunity to meet several new people in a day and initiate conversations with relevant professionals. Also, these people are more likely to be actively looking to expand their networks.
- 2 Forge deeper, more meaningful connections**

In today's era of video call fatigue, in-person meetings give you an opportunity to stand out and make a more memorable impression.
- 3 In-person conversations leave little room for misinterpretation**

Face-to-face meetings make it easier to communicate and make a connection. Your body language and tone are less likely to be misread in in-person settings.

Both in-person and virtual networking have their own set of advantages and disadvantages. As a newcomer in Canada, you should try to find a balance between both models and look for networking platforms that works best for you. Here are some tools and platforms you can leverage to start building your network:

Networking through LinkedIn

Whether you're looking to network or find a job, it is important to [optimize your LinkedIn profile](#) and keep it up-to-date. Your LinkedIn profile will likely be the first thing people see when they connect with you. Unlike a resume, which is customized for each job, your LinkedIn profile should be generic and should highlight all your skills, experiences, and certifications. Be sure to use a professional headshot and grab people's attention with a compelling headline.

Use LinkedIn's advanced search filters to find new connections based on their organization, job title, and other criteria. Always personalize your LinkedIn connection request messages to communicate who you are and why you want to connect. You can also increase your visibility and promote your personal brand by being active on LinkedIn. Post, share, and engage with relevant content to get noticed by other professionals.





Tips to customize your LinkedIn connection requests

Introduce yourself: Include a quick introduction (no more than a line or two) about who you are and what you do.

Mention how you found them: Whether you met them at a networking event or if you were simply searching for specific industry professionals, mentioning how you found them is a good way to capture their interest.

Connect on common ground: Look at their LinkedIn profile to see if there are any shared interests, groups, academic institutions, mutual connections or employers, and use that as an ice-breaker in your connection

message. If you have mutual connections, you can ask one of them to make an introduction.

Be clear about your intention to connect: Outlining your intentions in the connection request will help set expectations. Be clear about what you want from them, whether you're seeking professional advice, want to learn about their work, or are exploring employment opportunities at their company. Do not ask for a job in your connection message.



Coffee chats or informational interviews

A coffee chat, also known as an informational interview or coffee interview, is an informal, in-person or virtual meeting with an experienced professional to learn more about a specific company, an industry, or that individual's career path and role. Coffee chats can also help you gain insights into the local job market and get accustomed to Canadian culture.

The key to a successful coffee chat is preparation. Research the person you're meeting – look at their company website and go over their career path by visiting their LinkedIn profile, jot down some key questions you would like to ask, and take note of any important information they convey.

If you have a list of organizations you'd like to work with, you can connect with people working in those companies and request informational interviews. These meetings can provide you valuable insights into the company culture and vision, organizational structure, hiring process, and open positions.

Coffee chats with people in roles similar to the ones you are applying to can give you information about required skills, responsibilities, tools they use for work, and key performance metrics for their position. Use these insights to bridge skill gaps, polish your resume, and prepare for interviews.

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Tips to help you master informational interviews

Do your research. Review their LinkedIn profile and company website.

- Prepare a list of informed, intelligent questions before your meeting.
- Be clear about what you want to get from the meeting and set the tone accordingly.
- Have your elevator pitch ready - this will help you confidently answer the “tell me about yourself” question
- Stay away from personal questions and don't ask for a job in a coffee chat.
- Ask for recommendations on other people you should connect with in their field or organization.
- Send a thank you email. You can personalize it by adding some takeaways you got from the meeting and how these will help you.



Questions to ask during a coffee chat

If you're ever stuck or feel lost or nervous during a coffee chat, here are some questions you can ask to keep the conversation alive:

- 1 How did you get started in your career? I'd love to learn more about what you do and the core components involved.
- 2 What does a typical day at [company] look like for you? What do you like most about your job? What's the most challenging part of your job?
- 3 What do you like most about working at [company]? (Or conversely) What are some less ideal aspects of working at [company]?
- 4 Are there any meetups or networking events that you would recommend?
- 5 What are the biggest challenges you feel that [industry/ company] is currently facing in Canada?
- 6 What's the next chapter for you in your career?
- 7 Do you have any advice for someone like me – a newcomer who's just getting started with their career in Canada?
- 8 What skills do you think are most important for someone interested in a job like yours?
- 9 Do you have recommendations for anyone else I should talk to or resources I should explore?
- 10 Do you know anyone hiring that I should take a look at?

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In-person or virtual networking events

Attending various industry-specific conferences and networking events is a good way to broaden your professional network locally and meet professionals and industry leaders from your field of work. In addition to physical, in-person events, there are also many virtual networking events being organized that allow people to make connections remotely.

Events hosted by industry associations and settlement agencies are a great place to meet other professionals in your field. You can also find virtual networking events for different industries and interests on websites like [Eventbrite](#) and [Meetup](#).

Networking via social networks

LinkedIn is not the only social network you can use to build a network. You can also find professionals you'd like to connect with on [Twitter](#) and initiate a conversation.

Depending on your industry, [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) groups might be useful platforms for networking—but make sure your profile is professional! [Clubhouse](#) is another app where you can virtually meet and share ideas with like-minded people, listen to expert speakers, and ask questions.

Social networks also give you an opportunity to build “warm connections” by engaging with other people by commenting on, liking or sharing their posts. If your initial interactions go well, request a coffee chat to take the conversation forward.

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Making professional connections while volunteering

Volunteering can be a key tool in building your Canadian network. During your initial days or months as a newcomer in Canada, you may not know many people, and cultural differences may limit you from proactively reaching out to locals to build connections.

People in all stages of their career volunteer in Canada, it is encouraged from a very young age, and many companies encourage their employees to volunteer alongside their jobs. Volunteering gives you a chance to meet like-minded professionals, showcase your skills in practice, and build long-lasting relationships. In some cases, volunteer work may also lead to employment opportunities or you might be able to get a recommendation or referral from someone you volunteered with.

Here are some websites you can visit to find volunteer work in Canada:





Survival jobs, side hustles, and other jobs

Many newcomers think of [survival jobs](#) and side hustles as just a means to make ends meet until they find a “proper job”, but these can also be great networking opportunities. Side hustles or freelance opportunities are a great way to demonstrate your professional skills to potential professional contacts or even employers. If you’re working in a field that aligns with your professional interests or meeting people from different backgrounds, you might be able to make some valuable connections.

Even if your survival job doesn’t directly relate to your professional path, don’t worry. With a little effort, you can start building connections anywhere and find opportunities to share your background and elevator pitch with relevant people. Christopher Gonsalvez, who arrived in Canada from Dubai in 2020, started a lawn mowing business as a side hustle while looking for full-time opportunities in global procurement. “Even when I was cutting lawns, I made real connections with so many people. Some of my lawn mowing clients even helped me get interviews,” says Christopher. You can read [Christopher’s newcomer story](#) to learn more about how networking helped him find a job in global procurement.

In addition, the contacts you make in your professional roles might be useful later in subsequent jobs. Be sure to stay in touch with your professional connections throughout your career and offer them support wherever you can.

Bridging programs

Bridging programs (sometimes also called bridge programs or bridge training programs) are typically offered by employers, colleges, and universities, and normally require a fee to enroll. They are designed to help participants bridge a gap in their career, when they are transitioning from a different country, industry, or profession.

Bridge programs help you access the hidden job market and often provide networking opportunities as part of their curriculum. In addition, many bridging programs provide training on workplace-specific culture and communication to help you make great first impressions!

These programs also help transfer your valuable skills and experience to a new job in Canada and can actively assist you with your job search. Some bridging programs also include a mentorship program which connects you with qualified mentors with a proven track record.



Tip: Learn more about the scope of your profession, certifications and licences you may require, and analyze potential career paths using our [Canadian job market guide](#).

Where and how to find the right bridging program for you

- Bridge programs can be found through provincial government websites, or through most major colleges and universities, such as [Ryerson University](#), [Humber College](#), [Seneca College](#), [York University](#), the [University of Toronto](#), the [University of British Columbia](#), and the [University of Calgary](#).
- Universities tend to provide bridging programs tailored to professions (i.e. accounting, architecture, law, business), while colleges offer bridge training for trades (i.e. plumbing, engineering, construction).
- Many bridging programs are available as online courses or part-time on evenings and/or weekends. Make sure to find one that suits your schedule without overwhelming you.
- Research the reputation of the institution offering a bridging program and ask what their success rate is. For example, what percentage of graduates pass their licensing exam on the first try? Or what percentage of graduates find work in their field within twelve months of completion?
- If your field doesn't require a license or exam to work in Canada, consider curriculums that offer more transferable "soft skills," such as how to communicate effectively in Canadian workplaces or how to improve your leadership or managerial skills.



How to network effectively as a newcomer

As a newcomer, you'll need to start building your professional network in Canada from scratch. While the idea of making and maintaining connections in a new country can be daunting, with the right skills and resources, you will soon be able to master the art of networking.

10 skills that you need to build to network effectively

If you've moved to Canada from a country where networking isn't an essential part of the professional culture, it may take some time for you to become comfortable with networking meetings. You may even need to develop or hone some additional skills to be able to effectively connect and communicate with other professionals.

Polishing these skills will work to your advantage in more ways than one as, in most cases, the skills you need for networking coincide with the ones you need in the workplace or for job interviews. In this section, we'll cover networking skills that you need in order to effectively build connections.

1

Two-sided communication

One of the many advantages of networking is that it's as much about promoting your personal brand as it is about learning from the experience of others.

When someone takes time to speak with you, give them a chance to talk. Active, attentive listening is an essential networking skill that ensures you absorb the information being shared with you. You can then ask intelligent, relevant questions and get insights that might be useful for your professional success in Canada.

Keep distractions away and focus on the conversation. It is rude to interrupt when someone is talking, so save your questions until they've finished speaking.

2

Verbal and non-verbal communication skills

Many newcomers avoid networking or public speaking as they lack confidence in their English language or interpersonal skills. However, practice is the best way to overcome the fear of speaking in public.

Take the time to work on your language skills and sign up for English as a Second Language (ESL) resources and community groups that help newcomers improve their speaking and listening skills.

What you say is only half the image you present—non-verbal communication, or your body language, conveys a lot about your personality and how engaged you are in a meeting. Avoid crossing your arms, closing your fists tightly, or hunching your shoulders, as this can make you seem unfriendly. Be aware of your posture and make eye contact with the people you are talking to.

Don't feel insecure if you have an accent or have trouble understanding some words. Remember, Canada is a diverse, multicultural country, and most people are accepting of the fact that English may not be your first language.

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The art of small talk

Small talk is culturally important in Canada. It serves as an icebreaker before you get to the actual topic of conversation.

Since small talk is meant to create a safe, comfortable environment, be sure to choose non-controversial, light topics. Some common small talk topics include the weather, sports, arts, entertainment, hobbies, and current events. Stay away from topics like politics, personal or family matters, income, and religion.

As a newcomer, you can build your small talk skills by staying up-to-date on the news, developing an interest in Canadian arts, culture, and, of course, sports.

4

Offering to give before you get

One mistake many newcomers make is to only think about what they can get out of a connection, without considering what they may be able to offer in return. Networking is not one-sided, so be sure to make a list of your unique skills and strengths before you start.

Even if you are new to the Canadian job market, review the LinkedIn profile of the person you're going to meet to understand their role and see where you can contribute. During your meeting, convey your willingness to help and ask if there's anything you can support them with.

By offering to give before you get, you can build meaningful connections and also prove your value to your network. Once they've seen your skills in action, they'll be more likely to offer guidance, connect you to others, or refer you to job opportunities.



Tip: The Arrive article on [English as a second language: ESL resources in Canada](#) gives an overview of several valuable language resources that can help you improve your written and spoken English skills.

5

Preparation before networking meetings

When it comes to networking meetings, preparation can make all the difference. Put your research skills to good use and learn as much as you can about the background, role, and career path of the individual you're going to meet.

Know what you want to get from your networking meetings—further connections, guidance, or referrals. Prepare a list of questions accordingly, and customize your list based on each person's industry, skills, and position.

Finally, spend some time creating an engaging, authentic elevator pitch. Remember that an elevator pitch is not a sales pitch, but a chance to tell your story and highlight your skills in an impactful way.

6

Asking for constructive feedback

An easy way to build your networking skills is to get an honest opinion on what you maybe doing wrong or need to improve. Before an important networking meeting, do a practice run with some friends and ask them for feedback on your small talk, elevator pitch, questions, and overall communication skills.

You can also ask for constructive feedback towards the end of your networking meetings. Be open and humble when you ask for tips to help you build your networking skills. In most cases, people are willing to offer guidance and insights that you can leverage in future meetings.

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Asking for recommendations and introductions

In Canada, every professional you meet will likely have their own network. As a newcomer, it might not come easily to ask the people you meet to connect you with others. This is a networking skill that you'll need to build as you start to grow and nurture your network.

Before you meet someone for a coffee chat, go through their LinkedIn network and see if they know someone you'd like to be introduced to. If you're looking for specific information or trying to build a particular skill, it is a good idea to ask your connections if they can recommend someone in their industry or organization who might be able to help.

Once you've cultivated a meaningful relationship, you may also be able to get introductions to others in their network. When you're introduced to someone by a person they know and trust, they are more likely to take out time to speak with you.

Keeping track of your networking meetings

For most newcomers, the first few months of networking can be overwhelming. Since you're building your network from scratch in Canada, you might be meeting as many as four or five people each week. This makes it hard to keep track of who you've met and what you discussed. As a result, you might forget valuable insights or miss out on following up with some people.

Keeping track of your meetings is an important networking skill. Create a list with names of people you meet, meeting dates, their designations and organization, discussion points, and follow-up actions. When you set up follow-up meetings, you'll be able to refer to your list to review points that you had discussed with them earlier.

This list can also help you identify connections who might be useful when you're applying for a job. You'll also be able to clearly see gaps in your network, such as industries you don't have connections in, so you can focus on those in the future.

Following up and following through

Building meaningful professional relationships takes time and in most cases, the first meeting is only an introduction. The value you can leverage from your connections often depends on how much time and effort you invest in maintaining them.

You can start by sending a personalized thank you note within 24 hours of your meeting. If you've agreed upon any action items during your meetings, don't forget to deliver on them.

After your initial meeting, you can keep the conversation going by regularly sharing relevant developments and insights, engaging on their social media posts, or asking for their opinion on topics related to the ones you discussed.

Patience and perseverance

Patience is another skill you'll need as you start building your network in Canada. It's easy to become demotivated when your LinkedIn connection requests go unanswered or when the people you connect with online are unwilling to meet you. Even after the initial coffee chats, some of your connections may not be able or willing to offer you the advice, guidance, or contacts you need.

It takes time to nurture relationships and identify how and where someone might be able to add value. You might also have to demonstrate your own willingness to help before someone agrees to support you. Even if some meetings don't go as well as you had hoped, don't give up. Each new meeting is a learning opportunity, so keep an open mind. Remember that it only takes one connection or referral to land your dream job in Canada.



Networking tips for newcomers

Whether you are just starting your career, exploring a different professional field, or transitioning into a new role, here are some networking tips that will help you get started in your journey of building strong, lasting professional contacts who can guide you along your career path in Canada:

Leverage existing connections

Before you set out to build your network from scratch, check if you have any existing connections in Canada. These could be friends, relatives, alumni from your school, or former colleagues from your home country who've also moved to Canada.

Tapping into existing connections first can help you speed things up, as you already have a meaningful relationship with them. You can ask your existing connections to introduce you to other professionals in their network or refer you for job opportunities. They might also be able to help you create an impressive Canadian-style resume or share insights from their own job search experience.



Tip: You can find the resources you need to create a compelling resume that will attract recruiters' attention and prepare for interviews in our guide on [Finding your Career in Canada](#).

Focus on quality, not quantity

Building a network from scratch in Canada can be a stressful, time-consuming process. Many newcomers mistakenly believe that the more connections they make, the better their network will be. However, it is the strength of your network that truly matters, not the size.

Rather than sending dozens of LinkedIn connections requests every day, spend some time identifying professionals who are in organizations or roles you'd like to work in and individuals you find inspiring. Strategic networking will reduce the time and effort you need to invest in building connections and improve the quality of insights you can extract. More importantly, it'll make it easier to follow up and stay in regular touch with the people in your network.

Know what you have to offer

Networking is about sharing: giving and receiving. Before you start networking, think of the value you can offer your network. Helping others is a great way of building meaningful relationships and positioning yourself as a potential candidate. People are also more likely to remember someone who offers to help them, rather than someone who is seeking their support.

There are numerous ways in which you can bring value to your network, including through problem-solving, providing guidance on a specific subject or skill, connecting them to someone in your network, or offering your support for executing a project.

“ Strategic networking will reduce the time and effort you need to invest in building connections and improve the quality of insights you extract. ”

Find networking platforms you're comfortable with

Networking may not look the same for everyone. While some people might be outgoing and social, others may be more reserved. If you're an extrovert and do well in a group setting, in-person or virtual networking events organized by industry associations might be the best option for you.

If you're still assessing your comfort level around large groups, look for events that have smaller groups. If you're an introvert and prefer smaller or less formal social settings, you can look for networking settings you're most comfortable with, such as social networks or blogs. Once you've established a level of trust and comfort, you can take the conversation to the next phase with one-to-one coffee chats.

If you prefer meeting people in a work setting, rather than a social one, volunteering, survival jobs, or side hustles can also be excellent ways to network.

Set networking goals for greater discipline

If you find it hard to set aside dedicated time for networking, a goal-based approach might help. As a newcomer, you should ideally be meeting three or four new people each week, but this can vary based on your schedule and objectives. Setting concrete goals will help you prioritize networking alongside your job search and other daily tasks.

Your goals can focus on the number of meetings (including follow-ups) you intend to take each week, new connection requests, priority industries or organizations, and information you're looking to gather from your network. They can also be centred on making yourself a more valuable connection by sharing relevant content on platforms like LinkedIn or offering support to others. Be sure to set realistic, measurable, and incremental networking goals that encourage you to step out of your comfort zone, without causing stress.

Adopt a consultative approach to networking

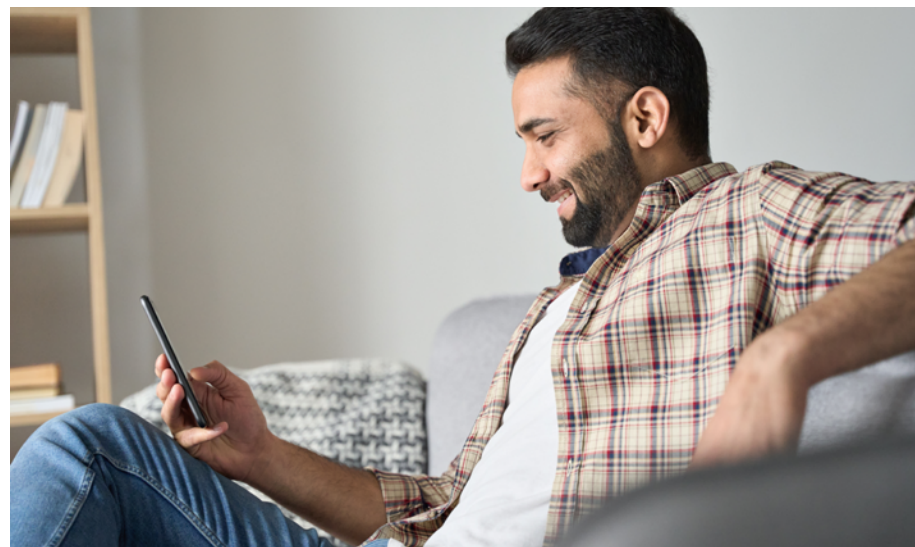
It's always better to adopt a "consultative approach" to networking as opposed to a sales approach. The difference is that you seek to understand before demanding to be understood and you listen and learn before expecting to be heard.

It is quite natural as a newcomer to be focused on addressing your immediate need of finding a job. However, if you come across as pushy, the doors you're trying to open will close and you'll lose out on potentially valuable professional connections. Changing your approach to networking meetings can dramatically change the outcomes. You'll also end up learning much more about the Canadian job market, various organizations, and roles in the process.

Prepare and refine your elevator pitch

An elevator pitch is a 20 to 30 second introduction that highlights your expertise and area of interest. A good elevator pitch is positive and conversational, and includes a question or call to action, so that your connection can respond to it. You can use this in networking meetings to answer the "tell me about yourself" question.

It can take a while to perfect your elevator pitch, so keep refining it based on the feedback and reactions you get. If you have a mentor, you can ask them to help you refine your pitch. In Canada, people are generally very open to providing tips on how to enhance your elevator pitch or better present yourself.



Tip: Invest time in building an elevator pitch that is relatable and authentic. Learn more in our article on [How to craft an impressive elevator pitch to enhance your personal brand](#).

Don't go in looking for a job

It is true that, as a newcomer, networking can help you access the hidden job market in Canada. However, there is so much more that networking can do for you. Keep in mind that networking is not meant to be transactional, so don't expect that your professional connections will be willing to give you a job or referral as soon as you meet.

By going into networking meetings with a "give me a job" mindset, you might lose out on the opportunity to improve your networking skills, understand the job market, and learn from other people's career journey. You will also not be able to build meaningful connections with potential mentors who can help you increase your employability.

Keep the conversation alive

The most important part of networking comes after you've made the initial connection. Send thank-you notes after someone connects with you on LinkedIn and after coffee chats to keep the conversation going. It's a good practice to keep track of what you discussed during each networking meeting, so you can refer back to your notes during follow up. This also helps you remember your connections' interests and create a stronger bond.

Keep in touch with your network and follow up at regular intervals through meetings or email. You can also keep the conversation alive by engaging with their social media posts and sharing information that would be interesting or relevant for them. If you're seeking support from your network for your job search, be sure to keep them updated about any changes to your professional situation.

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Networking is not meant to be transactional, so don't expect your professional connections to give you a job or referral as soon as you meet.
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Don't let what others are doing discourage you

Your goals and approach for building a network may not be the same as those of your friends or acquaintances in Canada. Just because someone else is meeting 10-12 people each week or opting to attend in-person networking events doesn't mean that's the only approach, or the right one for you. You might have very different schedules, objectives, and comfort levels with meeting new people, or work in different fields.

Regardless of how many meetings you choose to do or the platform you pick, make sure that you have enough time to prepare and follow up with everyone in your network. Don't be discouraged if someone else manages to get a referral or job through their network before you do.

As long as you invest the time and effort to nurture your professional relationships, networking will add value and lead you closer to your career goals.

Do's and don'ts of networking

- ✓ Do research the person or people you'll be meeting
- ✓ Do familiarize yourself with the venue or virtual meeting platform
- ✓ Do be respectful and convey gratitude
- ✓ Do dress professionally
- ✓ Do be proactive with introductions
- ✓ Do use small talk as a conversation starter
- ✓ Do be a good listener
- ✓ Do offer a warm smile and maintain eye contact
- ✓ Do follow up after your meeting
- ✗ Don't act overly curious
- ✗ Don't just linger around others during networking events; be polite and inclusive
- ✗ Don't make the other person feel uncomfortable by asking intrusive questions
- ✗ Don't pick topics like religion and politics
- ✗ Don't be disinterested in the conversation
- ✗ Don't make a sales pitch
- ✗ Don't use your phone in the middle of a conversation
- ✗ Don't be pushy if the other person is not inclined to talk



Tips to help you master virtual networking

Since virtual networking makes it easier to build connections, many newcomers mistakenly believe that it's okay to be less formal in these meetings than they would in person. However, almost all of the preparation that goes into in-person networking applies to virtual networking as well.

Remember, networking, regardless of whether it's in-person or virtual, is a way of building professional connections. The impression you make during your introductory chats or meetings will determine whether these seasoned professionals will be willing to add you to their network. So, be sure to adhere to your networking basics—from researching the people you're meeting to offering authentic value, when you start networking virtually.

In addition to the tips we've shared in earlier sections, here are a few additional things you need to keep in mind for virtual networking:

- 1 Check your technology.**
Make sure your internet connection, microphone and camera are in perfect working order before your virtual meeting. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the video call platform prior to your meeting. Always keep your camera on during meetings and if there's noise in your background, put yourself on mute when the other person is talking.

2 Be professional.

Go in with a list of topics you'd like to discuss and don't ask personal questions. Be punctual and dress the way you would for in-person networking meetings—professionally from head-to-toe.

3 Be aware of your environment.

Create an appropriate work setting and keep your desk and background distraction-free. If you don't have a dedicated workspace, apply a professional virtual background in your video call tool.

4 Don't multitask.

Appreciate the fact that someone has taken the time to talk to you and pay attention to what they have to say. It's rude to interrupt or check your phone when someone else is speaking. It can be very distracting, and more importantly, it gives people the impression that you aren't interested in what they have to say. Be sure to put your phone on silent during networking meetings. There might be other distractions around you at home, such as children or pets, so find a quiet place for meetings.

5 Don't forget to follow up.

If you're meeting several new people every week, it can be hard to keep the conversation going with all of them. However, regular follow up is the best way to maintain professional relationships. Keep track of all your virtual meetings and create a realistic follow up schedule.

Your professional network is your support system as you advance in your career journey. As a newcomer, the sooner you start building your professional network in Canada, the better prepared you will be when the time comes to begin your job search.



Summary

Building a professional network from scratch in a new country can be challenging. However, networking is essential, not just to land your first job in Canada, but for your ongoing professional success.

Whether you're networking in person or virtually, it's important to make a good impression by going in prepared, behaving professionally, and asking the right questions. Be sure to follow up after your networking meetings to cultivate meaningful, long-lasting professional relationships which will help you at every step of your career path.



Key Takeaways

Networking is essential for your professional success in Canada.

Your professional network gives you an opportunity to tap into the hidden job market, promote your personal brand, learn from other people's successes and failures, and find a mentor who can help you adapt your skills to the local job market. You can apply your learnings from networking to better understand the Canadian work environment, identify job opportunities, and improve your interview skills.

You can build more connections through virtual networking.

While networking in person has its own advantages, virtual networking gives newcomers an opportunity to start building professional connections even before landing in Canada. By networking through virtual coffee chats, you can save valuable time, accommodate more networking meetings in your schedule, and build your network faster.

Find networking platforms and tools that work best for you.

There are several places and opportunities you use to start building your network, including, LinkedIn, social media, in-person or virtual coffee chats, networking events, volunteer or survival jobs, and bridging programs. Regardless of the platform you pick, be sure to put your best foot forward and leave a positive impression.

Remember that networking is a two-way street.

Know your strengths and be willing to help the professionals you meet. Not only will this establish you as a reliable connection, it will also give you an opportunity to showcase your skills. During networking meetings, listen attentively and wherever possible, ask for feedback to help improve your networking and interview skills.

Preparation is key for all networking meetings.

Research the person you're going to meet and use those insights to create a list of intelligent, relevant questions to ask. This will help you identify things you have in common and ask questions that will give you the information you need to further your career goals.

Nurture valuable professional relationships.

Networking is not about meeting as many people as you can. It is about strategically investing in and nurturing professional relationships with people who can provide you with guidance and support all through your career. Stay in touch with the professionals you meet and always be on the look out for ways to add value to their professional lives.

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