

10 Easy Ways To Develop Strong Professional Relationships In A Virtual Working World

Here are ten ways to help you develop and maintain relationships at work ...

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Forbes (FRBS)

Stakeholder(s):

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Senior Contributor | ForbesWomen | I help people advocate for themselves and leverage opportunities. — A lawyer and strategist, I help individuals and organizations position and advocate for themselves and leverage opportunities to advance their priorities. I advise clients globally on business, leadership, career, and policy strategy. I have worked in the public and private sectors and most recently at the University of Maryland Center for Health & Homeland Security working on crisis management. Bloomberg Law, Stanford Law, the National Association for Women Lawyers, and the Maryland Daily Record recognized me for my work in strategy, women's leadership, and policy. My writing has appeared in The Washington Post, TIME, Fortune, Fast Company, LeanIn.org, and Levo League. I have spoken at the U.S. Department of State, Oxford University's Power Shift Forum, Campbell Soup Co., Delaware

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Professionals :

The success of many professionals depends on relationships they build with colleagues and stakeholders. Successful professionals know how to relate to and collaborate with others that can help them to receive critical information and the support they need to accomplish their goals.

Vision

Professionals succeed

Mission

To help develop and maintain relationships at work

Values

Relationships

Collaboration

Mutuality

Professional Relationships

Develop and maintain relationships at work

1. Objectives

Identify why you want to connect

Identify why you want to connect, and don't make it only about you. — If there is a particular person you want to develop a professional relationship with, be clear on the reason why. Does the person have a particular expertise in an area that you need to learn more about? Have they worked with an organization that could benefit your project? In identifying the reason for your outreach, identify potential ways you can support them. You don't want to come across as only a "taker," as organizational psychologist Adam Grant says. Successful relationships are mutually beneficial.

2. Assistance

Ask for help from friends and colleagues

Ask for help from a friend or colleague. — If you know someone who has a professional relationship with the person with whom you want to connect, consider leveraging a connection. Does a friend of yours know this person? Has a teammate worked with this person? A warm introduction, or having someone you know introduce you, can act as an endorsement, which can help increase the other person's interest in being open and wanting to engage with you.

Stakeholder(s):

Friends

Colleagues

3. Networking

Leverage professional networking platforms

Leverage professional networking platforms like LinkedIn. — When you reach out using professional networking platforms, you are not just sending a message. You are also sharing a profile. When you send a connection request on LinkedIn, for example, you give the other person the opportunity to see a picture of you and learn about your background. Providing this type of context can pique the person's interest to want to engage with you.

Stakeholder(s):

LinkedIn

4. Commonalities

Highlight commonalities

Highlight a commonality. — If you have something in common with the other person, consider highlighting this. Did you both graduate from the same college or work at the same company? Are you both avid cross-country skiers? If you learn from public information that you share something in common, highlight it. Commonalities can help to create emotional connections, which can, in turn, enable strong relationships.

5. Formality

Strike a balance between business and informality

Don't be all business. But don't be too informal. — In reaching out to an individual, you want to keep it professional. You want to be respectful. But you don't want to come across as rigid or aloof. Similarly, you don't want to act like you are sending a text message to a friend. Strike a balance between being professional and inviting. You could say, "Hope you are well." You might use one exclamation point when saying "Thank you!" at the end of your email. Be careful using the exclamation point in multiple instances as it can come across as too excited or eager. It is okay to show some emotion, but do not let emotions become a distraction.

6. Televideo

Connect by telephone or internet video

Connect soon by telephone or internet video. — After connecting via email or LinkedIn, for example, try to move your conversation soon thereafter to the phone or online video platform. Hearing your voice and seeing you can help the other person feel more that they are connecting with a human being, which can strengthen the relationship you want to develop.

7. Pleasantries

Be pleasant and inviting

Be pleasant. — In any and all communications you have with the individual, be nice. It is okay to smile. People are more inclined to work with you if you are inviting.

8. Continuity

Stay in touch

Stay in-touch. — The first connection is only an initial connection. Relationships do not develop on one instance of communication. Relationships take time to nurture. It takes time to build trust, which ultimately makes people feel comfortable working with you. Periodically check-in with the person. Ask about their priorities to see if you can provide support. Share a link to an article that might help with their work. But don't bombard them with too much contact or content. You want to be helpful, not overwhelming.

9. Clarity & Conciseness

Be clear and concise

Be clear and concise. — Communication skills are key to developing effective working relationships. If you cannot communicate clearly, the other person will not want to communicate. Be focused in your communications. Don't write a memorandum. Read your email out loud before sending. Will they understand what you are asking? Will the recipient misinterpret you? Is that sentence necessary to making your point?

10. Mutuality

Facilitate connections and introductions for others

Make connections and introductions for the other person. — Developing and maintaining strong relationships does not just focus on you and the other person. Showing that you can and are willing to be a resource for them and expand their network can strengthen the relationship you have with that person. The other person will see that you want them to succeed. Be clear on why you want to connect with the person, and approach the relationship naturally with the idea of making it mutually beneficial. The purpose of relationships is to relate, which requires thought, effort and time.

Administrative Information

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