

The 6 most cringeworthy networking moves

Networking can be hugely helpful for growing your knowledge, building your connections and opening you up to opportunities you might not have even known existed.

Many of us can find it challenging – in a 2021 poll on [SEEK's Twitter account](#), 51% of Kiwi respondents said they didn't network at all – but it's a lot easier if you know what not to do. Avoid making the six common mistakes below and you'll be well on your way to becoming a networking pro.

1. **Using someone's name irresponsibly.** Social media makes it a lot easier to connect with people, but if you have no history with someone [other than a social media connection](#), don't fabricate one just to try and get a foot in the door. Jonathan Hall, Executive Consultant at Six Degrees says "overstating relationships comes across as inauthentic."

It can even see you miss out on opportunities, says career coach Nicole Grainger-Marsh. "I've seen people who were strong candidates for positions be blackballed from an organisation because they used this strategy." Instead, Hall recommends mentioning "one person who knows you really well".

2. **Not following up on opportunities.** If someone recommends you to another person for an opportunity, one of the worst things you can do is not follow through. Grainger-Marsh says, "I've been on the receiving end of people [not following up on introductions I've made](#), and each time it leaves me feeling as if I wasted my contact's time. Those people never received an introduction from me again. The moral of the story – not following through can be a career-limiting move."

Hall recommends thanking someone for a referral by "taking them out for lunch or a coffee. Put in the time and effort and these relationships will be with you for life."

3. **Not paying it forward.** Networking is a two-way street, so don't just take introductions from other people – help connect others. "[Maintaining your network](#) is just as crucial as building it," Hall explains. "You'll lack credibility if you only contact your network when you need something."

"To get the most out of your network, you need to give," Grainger-Marsh says. "If you give to someone, you're bound to get something back in return." Hall recommends providing them with valuable information. "It might be a link to an article you think they may be interested in, or a referral to someone else."

4. **Being unclear about what you need.** “When asking for help from your network, whether it’s looking for a job or requesting a reference, the last thing you want to do is create work for people,” Grainger-Marsh says. “The key is to make it easy for them, which will mean you get exactly what you need.”

One way of doing this is to create a brief. “If you’re looking for a new role, write a one-pager on the type of role and organisation that you’re looking for, along with a brief summary of why you’re the ideal candidate.”

5. **Aiming for quantity over quality.** It’s far more valuable to [have a few relevant, quality contacts](#) than a pile of business cards whose names you can’t put to faces. “Building and maintaining an effective network takes effort; you need to be nurturing your relationships,” Grainger-Marsh says.

If your network is so vast that [you haven’t even communicated with contacts for several years](#), it’s time to get strategic. “Start by segmenting your connections into groups (e.g. industry contacts, mentors, previous peers), then prioritise these groups based on the benefit they will deliver.” For example, mentors will likely share advice on your industry, and peers could provide job opportunities. “Define your top three groups and then devise a strategy to nurture the connections in each, ensuring that time and effort is allocated in line with priority.”

6. **Being pushy.** When you meet someone, “it can be tempting to immediately engage in a sales pitch” for yourself or your business, Hall says. “However, this can do more harm than good. It’s essential to build rapport first.” In other words, get to know your contact, and find out how you can help them. “Be open to accepting requests and help out when you can, and trust that this will come full circle.”

Grainger-Marsh adds, “Take the time to build an authentic connection and you’re more likely to get what you need.”

If you take this advice into account and avoid making cringe-worthy moves, you should find much more success with your networking efforts.