



Networked for Success

This Insider Guide gives you a structure for thinking and talking about networking in the context of work and family. It provides practical tips and expert advice that will help you explore networking principles, consider the place of 'personal brand' in networking, and identify options for building and strengthening your networks.

Being a working parent or carer, with increased pressure on your time and energy, may mean you feel you have fewer opportunities for networking. But now, more than ever, you need to consider your profile in order to progress and stay on track - whilst being the person you want and need to be at home.

What is 'Networking'?

Which of the following defines networking?

- Attending an event
- Raising your profile
- Having a coffee with an old university friend
- Communicating what you have to offer
- Building and developing relationships



Most of us will choose Attending an event, but in actual fact just being there doesn't build or enhance your network, it's what you make of the opportunity and the impact you have that makes the difference.

Networking: what are the biggest challenges?



Networking can be challenging both practically and personally. These challenges usually fall into 4 categories.

These challenges are typically:

When?

Many working parents and carers are no longer available to network in the evenings or may be working remotely with fewer opportunities for face-to-face connections. Who? It's hard enough to know who you should be networking with, but doing so while you're redefining your identity as a working parent or carer can seem daunting.

How?

Learning how to initiate conversations online or face-to-face, and the best strategies for keeping the interactions natural can feel like a whole new language – one that is well worth learning.

What?

Deciding on a topic to discuss is paramount to getting the most out of networking, as is developing the skills to move small talk round to business conversations.

Not just face-to-face

In the 21st century workplace you need to be aware of your social media footprint; your network no longer lives in a rolodex. Through platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter you will likely have a wider network than you think. All of these expose and reflect on you as a brand. Start thinking about how you use these platforms; how do they support your 'smart' networking? Make sure you know your company's policy on social media and be clear on personal and professional profiles.

Make it count

Networking is most effective when you are make useful noise. For example, forwarding interesting articles and entering into dialogue with colleagues on and offline. Integrating this into our daily lives can keep our profile high at times when we are less available to attend lunchtime or evening events due to our commitments outside work.

Your brand

Networking and getting a better grasp of your 'personal brand' go hand-in-hand. You need to understand what before you embark on how. What do I have to offer? What are my core capabilities? Once you understand what smart networking is, you'll find ways of communicating these to the right people. Your personal profile has to be real and powerful, not boastful. Keep it honest and authentic, spoken in a matter-of-fact way, it will never sound boastful.

Some people prefer to think of their 'brand' as more of a personal narrative, personal statement or summary of strengths. It's not about becoming arrogant or pushy, but simply balancing out the tendency many of us have to take our strengths for granted; particularly when we feel most challenged by the amount we have on our plates.

Honest and upfront

Your guilt reflex may kick in when you have to leave work on time, or when you're not available for a meeting on a day you're not working. Ask yourself, how would you respond if you had a work clash and needed to leave for an offsite client meeting?

Assumptions made on either side, can be damaging. What do others think about your ability or ambition? And equally, what do you think others are thinking? Stop thinking this way, most of these perceptions are fantasy. Sneaking out of the office because you have to leave early is likely to get more comments than a confident goodbye.

Be upfront rather than allowing speculation. But be wary of over-sharing and giving too much information on your family commitments. You're unlikely to have large amounts of personal detail on your LinkedIn or other online profile, so think carefully about how much of this you share when connecting face-to-face.

Actions

- Look to those whose professional relationships you most admire. Observe how they connect with people around them. How can you emulate the skills and behaviours they demonstrate in making successful connections?
- Get beyond the cringe factor! Work on being more comfortable with giving positive messages about yourself and your contributions.
- Find personal narratives that are differentiating, not generic and fine tune them.
- Build the activity of raising your profile and networking into your day-to-day routine.
- Regularly review and hone your profile and messages, both on and offline - remember your profile is not static.



Further information

For more information on networking related topics, please see the resources below.

Resource	Website	Contact
Networking for People Who Hate Networking, Second Edition <i>Devora Zack</i>	www.amazon.co.uk/Networking-People-Hate-Second-Underconnected/dp/1523098538	N/A
Brilliant Networking <i>Stephen D'Souza</i>	www.amazon.co.uk/Brilliant-Networking-What-best-networkers/dp/0273714848	N/A
The Financial Times Guide to Business Networking <i>Heather Townsend</i>	www.amazon.co.uk/Financial-Times-Guide-Business-Networking/dp/1292003952	N/A
Reinventing You <i>Dorie Clark</i>	www.amazon.co.uk/Reinventing-You-Define-Imagine-Future/dp/1422144135	N/A
Personal Branding for Brits <i>Jennifer Holloway</i>	www.amazon.co.uk/Personal-Branding-Brits-yourself-sounding/dp/0957542801	N/A

Recommended Service



Back-Up Care

We provide a trusted safety net when regular care plans are disrupted, for last-minute emergencies and upcoming gaps in care - but you still need to work.

Visit your **Client Landing Page** to book care today and access your wider benefits.