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The Savvy Networker

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Everyone says it: "Networking is the best way to get a [job!](#)" That much is true. After that, the logic falls apart. People say, "My network will get me a job. So I'll start building my network right now!" They go to networking events and pump fists with strangers. They exchange business cards and go home happy, thinking, "The five people I met tonight can all be eyes and ears for me in my [job search!](#)"

There's one big problem. Those five people each retained maybe three seconds' worth of information about you.

There is an excellent chance that if you called any of these five folks on the phone tomorrow, you'd say your name and they'd ask, "Who?" They would have completely forgotten you. That's not surprising. Quick networking-event handshake conversations are not ideal for establishing the trusted relationships that lead to job-search introductions.

You've already got a network that can help you in your [job search](#). The network that matters most for job-seekers is the network made up of people who already know you.

Events Go Only So Far

The meet-and-greet gatherings are terrific places to meet people who may, over time, with cultivation, become trusted members of your network. Those events deserve 10 percent of your networking time, at most. The rest of the time is better spent re-connecting with your old, trusted network connections.

Most of us are lazy networkers. We say, "It's easier to meet new people than to dig up and touch base with old ones." Yet the people who already know you and have worked alongside you can vouch for you, with credibility. Someone who met you last week can say, "I met a smart guy last week at the Chamber of Commerce," and the first question he'll be asked is, "What do you know about him?" What can he say in reply, apart from "Nothing"? That's not the kind of job referral you need.

It's time-consuming and dull, but you've got to find and make contact with the people who can speak with authority about your work. Maybe you've lost track of all of them -- that's OK. That's what LinkedIn and search sites are for. It can be awkward to call someone and say, "I'm sorry we've fallen out of touch," but it's critical.

Nurturing Your True Network

You can start refreshing your true network -- the circle of people who have authentic and impressive stories to tell about you -- today. Grab a piece of paper and a pen (or sit down at your computer) and start writing names. Most of us, when pushed to do it, can list 50 people we should reconnect with. Job number one will be finding these folks and reaching out to them to catch up on what you and they have been doing since you last spoke. Job two is letting them know about your [job search](#).

Meeting new people can be fun for people who like that sort of thing, but meet-and-greet networking is not central to your job search. Tracking down and catching up with old colleagues, vendors, friends, and schoolmates is by far the more high-impact [networking](#) activity.

So, what are you waiting for?

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