

# Networking & References

## How to Build an Awesome Professional Network

Below are some core principles to help you meet and build professional relationships.

### Be awesome

In social life, people spend time with people that are fun, friendly, funny, etc. In business life, people will spend time with people they see as being, or potentially being, valuable to their career. To meet awesome people, you must be awesome yourself. If you want to meet venture capitalists, start an awesome company and they will be eager to meet with you. Always make the effort to listen and understand, but when appropriate, don't be afraid to drop a humble brag. Invite people to join you in activities that they can learn from, have fun at, or otherwise benefit from.

### Be helpful

Find ways to add value to others without expecting anything in return. When you do something for someone else that helps them in some way, they naturally want to reciprocate. In addition, by helping people in your network, your network gets stronger, and therefore you get stronger. Busy people often won't take meetings unless they know there could be some benefit. Make relevant and mutually beneficial introductions. Share your advice, expertise, or feedback. Share information such as events, articles or research that they would find helpful. Promote your contacts' work by sharing it with people you know.

### Be intentional

Identify the types of people you want to meet and ask people you're close with for introductions. Identify specific people you want to meet and locate them on LinkedIn. If you have any shared connections, ask him/her for an introduction. An introduction from a trusted friend, is much better than a cold call or e-mail. It adds rapport and credibility because you share a common relationship. If you don't have a shared connection, send your target a short, personalized and value offering cold e-mail.

### Go outside

Be proactive about creating opportunities. Attend conferences, events, and classes relevant to your industry. Say yes to invitations to parties, events, and even meetings. Join groups related to your personal and professional interests. Send e-mails to people you haven't talked to in a while. Manufacture serendipity.

## Be visible

Reach a wide audience and be visible to your existing network by writing a blog that delivers value to readers and displays your expertise. Maintain a concise LinkedIn profile that makes it easy for people to find you, and quickly learn who you are. Get public speaking engagements on your topic of expertise to reach a relevant audience. Use Twitter to publicly communicate with people around shared interests.

## Be patient

Successful business relationships don't happen by just exchanging business cards. They take time to build. Continually ping your contacts, offer value, and hang out with them in person. Focus on building relationships with good people, rather than just job titles. Good people learn and grow. Play the long game. Dig your well before you're thirsty, because relationships take a long time to build.

## Conclusion

Meeting and building relationships with awesome people takes a lot of time and effort, but the benefits in terms of learning from others and opening doors can be invaluable.

Michael B. Fishbein

## Asking others to be a Reference for you

References are becoming more important in many careers. Companies are looking more toward character and less toward specific knowledge, looking more for good people than just for geniuses. The best way to get to know the inner person are through your references.

Here are some tips when asking someone to be a reference on your behalf:

- Don't ask for a recommendation letter by e-mail.
- Don't spring it on the faculty member. Don't ask before or after class, in the hall or at any other random time. Instead, arrange an appointment, explaining that you wish to discuss your plans. This gives the professor a "heads up" and a chance to think about whether he or she can write a helpful letter on your behalf.
- Don't ask, "Could you write a letter?" Instead ask, "Do you feel that you are able to write a letter supporting (for example) my application for a marketing internship at Indiana INTERNnet?" Ask whether the faculty member feels that he or she can write a "helpful letter." You don't need any old letter - you need a good letter.
- Prepare. Discuss the reasons why you would be the best choice for the internship(s). Also, list the positions to which you are applying (and why), internship goals, future aspirations and why you believe the faculty member is a good candidate to write a letter on your behalf.
- Print out a job description for each desired internship so that faculty can customize your letters of reference accordingly.
- Writing a letter of recommendation isn't easy. Make your request at least one month before the due date. Earlier is better.
- Provide the professor with recommendation forms, transcript, essays and other essential information.
- Pay attention to signals that the faculty member does not want to write a letter on your behalf. Anything other than a glowing letter can harm your chances at securing the internship.

## What is the difference between a reference and a letter of reference/recommendation

A reference is a person who can verbally speak highly of your skills, work ethic, and why you would be a good match for the position you are applying/interviewing for. Typically, employers will contact your references via phone or email before making an offer of employment.

A letter of reference/recommendation is just that, a letter. The person writing the letter will be able to speak highly of your skills, work ethic, and why you would be a good match for the position you are apply/interviewing for. This should be written in business style.

*Example used from: [www.dailywritingtips.com](http://www.dailywritingtips.com)*

For more information go to our Virtual Career Center, [www.indianatech.edu/careercenter](http://www.indianatech.edu/careercenter)  
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