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FIRM MANAGEMENT

10 Networking Tips for Accounting Firm Leaders

From regular meet-ups with colleagues to social media, executives of accounting firms have many avenues when it comes to connecting with others and enlarging their circles. Read on for 10 tips on how to get the most out of your networks.

Paul McDonald • Mar. 24, 2015



It's no secret that networking is great for job seekers. But building a strong professional network is beneficial for much more than landing a new position. In a Robert Half Management Resources [survey](#), 60 percent of CFOs said the primary reason they network is business development.

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1. Be a resource for your contacts. Here's the cardinal rule of networking: Don't only reach out to your professional acquaintances when you need help. Instead, give as much as you take.

Be an active participant in your circle. Pay attention to what your contacts are talking about and offer your assistance. Be that person who makes valuable

introductions and brings people together.

2. Ask for help when you need it. At the same time, don't be afraid to reach out to your network for advice or assistance. A separate Robert Half [survey](#) found the top mistake professionals make when networking is not asking for help when they need it.

Your contacts will be flattered that you value their expertise, and your team will respect you for it. Leaders who come across as all-knowing will wind up weakening their connections.

3. Have a recruiter on speed dial. Networking is the lifeblood of recruiters. Their job is based on having plenty of strong connections in the industry. Build a strong relationship with recruiters who specialize in accounting, and you'll be that much closer to others in your field.

4. Give a hand. In the earlier days of your career, chances are a more senior accountant helped you with a recommendation, gave you a heads-up on a soon-to-be-vacated position or offered thoughtful advice. Now that you're at the top, it's your chance to pay it forward by passing job postings and other opportunities to contacts who might benefit from them.

5. Acknowledge others' successes. Many social media sites offer automatic updates regarding who in your network has received a promotion, won an award or landed a new job. When you see news about one of your contacts, reach out with a quick congratulations. This gesture of goodwill goes a long way toward strengthening your relationships.

6. Stay current on topics and opinions. Use your network, particularly on social media, to stay abreast of news in your industry. To be seen as credible and reliable, be careful with what you share or promote to your contacts; make sure it's all relevant information from reliable sources.

7. Branch out to other online networks. You might be on the big three — Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter — but what about YouTube for videos, Instagram and Pinterest for photos, and Vine for short-form video sharing?

While it's important not to spread yourself too thin, don't be afraid to explore various [social media](#) platforms and find a combination that suits you and your professional brand. Expanding your online presence is a good way to get your name out there and bring in new business.

8. Be human on social media. While you shouldn't post anything too personal online, social media is a good way to come across as more three-dimensional to your closer contacts. Go ahead and include some personal information: Share a family selfie on Facebook, tweet about your favorite team's latest win or post a cool landscape photo on Instagram.

9. Attend events. From [holiday gatherings](#) to after busy season parties and company picnics, events are a fun way to catch up with colleagues you don't see very often. Additionally, socializing in person helps you gauge employee morale and deepen relationships with your team.

The same goes for events outside of the firm. Virtual networking is important, but nothing beats one-on-one interaction.

10. Step up your professional involvement. Volunteering is a good way to get more face time with your existing network and to add new people to your circle. Offer to host an event for an industry association or serve on a board for a local nonprofit.

For an upcoming conference, propose to lead a workshop or session. For your network to see you as a thought leader, present yourself as one.

Did your contacts help you land your current job? Great — but don't let networking end there. To take your business and career even further and to maintain your reputation as a leader in your field, make cultivating and widening your circle a professional priority.

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