

OP-ED

Professional networks are key

So, you've landed a good job after nine months of transition. You've made up your mind to never let your network run down again.

Six months later, you're back in the swing of things, swamped with work, deadlines, commitments and family obligations. You've stopped doing the good things that helped you identify and land that new job, such as being involved in the networking groups, attending networking meetings and staying in touch with connectors and influencers — things you swore you'd never stop.

What can prevent this from happening? Why continue to push yourself to maintain useful activities from your job search mode? And once you commit to continue some level of networking, what's the most efficient way to proceed?

It's important to continuously maintain a vibrant professional network for the following reasons:

- To stay connected to key advisers you can trust for advice.
- To maintain reliable connections when searching for resources:
- To stay current on best management business practices.
- To keep perspective and remind yourself that there is a business world outside your own.
- To aid in your own mini-development plan by affiliating with organizations that enable you to stretch your skill set.
- To give something back to both nonprofit organizations and individuals who reach out to you. For some inexplicable reason, the more you give, the more good things happen to you.
- As insurance — there's never a guarantee on how long you'll be with your current employer.

Then, set the following goals:

First, identify at least one but preferably two organizations to affiliate with, either as a volunteer or board member. These organizations should share your values and excite you. One should bring you in contact with senior executives from your professional discipline. The other should enable you to make contributions based on your business knowledge and management experience.

Second, commit to two monthly networking meetings. These meetings should be divided between connecting with new people and maintaining relationships with those you've met along the way.

Making a concerted effort to maintain your professional network, regardless of your job status, is a prudent short-term insurance policy given the continuing unstable economy. Long term, you will become known as a networker, someone in the heart of professional activity and top of mind should that insurance policy ever be needed.



GUEST COMMENT

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