

Take Inventory of your Professional Network

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You may not think you have a professional network, but there might be some people you haven't considered yet. Let's brainstorm connections. Start by going through each item on the checklist and writing down everyone you can think of even if you aren't 100% sure you know them well enough to reach out.

- **Family:** Think about your immediate family (parents, grandparents, siblings) as well as your extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins). Now think about your partner's family.
- **Friends:** Think about the friends you see on a regular basis as well as your close friends you don't see often. Think about family friends who you've known since you were kids. Now think about friends you've made in different places you've lived or worked.
- **School:** Think about all the schools you've attended. Who have you stayed in touch with over the years? It could be former classmates, teachers, administrators, or other school staff.
- **Activities:** Think about any activities you've participated in outside of school and work. This could be volunteering, sports, clubs, church, etc. Who have you met?
- **Work:** Think back to every single job you've ever had. Think of your coworkers, supervisors, or other people at the organization you made a connection with. It's okay if that job isn't related to your current career plans. The people you knew may also be doing something completely different now.

Now that you have your list, go back through each person and ask yourself, "Do/Did I have a positive relationship with this person?" If so, consider reaching out to them. Here are some ways they may be able to help you:

- They might tell you more about a field you're interested in – what the job is actually like, what type of experience is helpful, what employers are looking for, etc.
- They might introduce you to people for an informational interview.
- They might tell you about open positions and/or refer you.

If it's been awhile, ask them to catch up before diving into your career goals. In a worst case scenario they don't respond to you. In a best case scenario they reply because they're looking to support you and build their network as well. You'll never know if you don't reach out!