

Blend Networking Into Your Life

If you're doing it right, networking easily blends into your life and isn't something that takes a lot of extra time.



You may think that making new contacts and spreading the word about yourself or your company is a chore, one that revolves around long days at trade shows or long nights at smoke-filled cocktail parties. But if you see *everyone* as a potential contact, you can network during any mundane daily activity, from waiting in line for a latte to working out at the gym.

Some conversations will be fleeting, yet some of the people you meet will become part of your circle. Being open to—and staying in touch with—those who cross your path is how you make your own luck. At some point, you're bound to learn about something that can benefit you professionally before the rest of the world finds out.

Some traditional networking tactics do take time, but not much. Busy executives who excel at career management set aside only a few extra minutes each day to touch base with professional contacts. The secret is to do it without fail.

It's easier than you think. Try squeezing in the calls or e-mails first thing in the morning (best for talking to people overseas), between meetings during your day or from home in the evenings. Staying in regular contact with colleagues, vendors and others you've worked with in the past helps you do your job better because it keeps you informed about new business opportunities, industry trends and potential candidates for your company.

BNI is a great way to jumpstart your networking efforts and keep you "in the game." The benefits it offers, both in meetings and online, are invaluable. But if you haven't been making the time to e-mail and call your contacts as well, at least take the time to ask yourself this: Are you really so busy that you can't spare five minutes each day on something that's so beneficial?