

Virtual Networking- Tips for Success

The coronavirus pandemic has meant that companies have had to move to remote work with an increasing number of workers facing layoffs. With this in view, you might be wondering how and if you can continue your job search in any way that will still have an impact.

While it is true that economists are predicting a recession, career experts say that with some strategic changes to approach, it is still best to continue actively working on your job search by networking and applying virtually. These tips will help you navigate the process.

1. Stay Pro-active

While many industries have and will continue to be hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, **others are still hiring** (<https://lfpres.com/business/local-business/amid-a-job-killing-pandemic-some-london-businesses-growing>). If you are employed but were considering changing job roles or industry, perhaps you might be best holding off until the situation is back to normal. If you are unemployed and need a stopgap, consider looking at the link posted here, or wherever else you can find an opportunity that makes sense for you and alleviates immediate needs in the meantime.

2. Use the Time to Reflect

It can be tempting to go for the first opportunity that presents itself or to launch into your job search without first fully considering what you really want to do next. Instead, take advantage of this slowing job market to really gain clarity on where you want to work and the type of role and title you are seeking.

Take some time to really assess your values, as we know that a values match is a key indicator for how happy you will be in any new role. Also assess your interests, skills and requirements. It is crucial to look inward first before looking outward. While it may be tempting to look for just “any job”, keep in mind that if the role you find does not meet your fundamental interests or values, you will be inviting even more stress into your life.

Once you are confident that you have a good sense of who you are and where you best fit, then create a document that lists your target industries, companies, job titles, and anything in particular you’re looking for. Cast your net wide to roles that hit just some or all your criteria and, to alternate roles that might gain you entry into an organization and give you opportunities for internal movement later. Beyond job openings, you can also focus on reaching out to individuals at companies you want to work for. (The company might not have an open role yet, but you can use your network to help you start making connections now.)



3. Get Comfortable Networking Online

In person events will be cancelled for a while, so you'll need to focus on a new networking strategy by seeking out like-minded professionals online and asking about virtual events.

Look for professional groups to join on Facebook and LinkedIn. Both platforms offer a wide range of options with groups for every profession. For instance, if you're looking for a job in marketing, you could join LinkedIn's Global Marketing and Communications Professionals group. Join in the conversation, post professional and relevant content and comments that demonstrate your expertise, and make yourself visible

Practice makes perfect! Rehearse your virtual informational interview and networking chat by first practicing with a friend or family member who can (and will) give you constructive feedback on your delivery. Test everything from your outfit, the content of your conversation down to your camera angle and background. Once you feel that you are confident with the technology then begin to invite professional contacts to meet for a "virtual coffee chat."

4. Stay in Touch

You may recently have had a job interview and felt positive about getting an offer but haven't heard back. Don't delay with checking in with the hiring manager via email. Let them know that you are aware of the situation and looking forward to hearing back when it makes sense for the organization.

Be thoughtful and ask if there is any way you can be of assistance. Let's say you're contacting someone you've networked with in the past. Your email can simply say: *"Given that I've led virtual teams, I might have some ideas to share on how to keep your employees feeling connected when they're not in the office."* You could also share some resources on this that you have found helpful. See this as an opportunity to demonstrate what type of employee you would be.

5. Gather Intel

The COVID-19 crisis can provide a unique glimpse into company culture. Take note of how leadership deals with this emergency and treats its employees by following the company on social media and watching for any media coverage. For instance, is the company allowing employees to work from home? Are they supporting workers in other creative ways? If they had to lay off staff, how did they do it?

When you do have a chance to interview, you'll be able to demonstrate that you understand the concerns leadership has and the threats the company faces from this pandemic. You can mention what you read and listened to and use your specific knowledge to drive home how you could help the company achieve its goals if hired.



6. Boost Your Skills

There is no better time to analyze the roles you are interested in; comparing your current skills to what is required. From there, make an action plan to present yourself as an ideal candidate once the job market picks up again. Once you've identified areas in which you could gain new skills or brush up on the ones you have, look for avenues to take these certifications such as online courses and certifications, many of which are free. For example, Ahria is providing free access to some Skillsoft courses. Similarly, LinkedIn Learning is also offering free training resources. And, as always, a quick search of Google will net you many results.

During an economic slowdown, it's important to focus on what you can control—improving your skills and reaching out to your network. Now is the time to build your foundation so when the crisis is over you are ready.

Adapted from: Roepe, L.R. What Does the Coronavirus Pandemic Mean for Your Job Search?
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/job-search-coronavirus>

