



Professional Networking in the Federal Government



Professional Networking Tips for Veterans

Networking is key to establishing and advancing your career, and can be particularly effective for Veterans. Networking with fellow Veterans will allow you to connect with those who share similar experiences and have successfully transitioned into the civilian workforce before you. Plus, other Veterans understand some of the challenges you will face and can offer support.

Did you know that 85 percent of all jobs are obtained through networking? When you network effectively, you are more likely to get useful career information and meet people who can help you assess new opportunities, offer practical guidance and share lessons learned. The reciprocal nature of networking also lets you share valuable information and experiences with others in your network. Like your military experience, the goal of networking is to help others achieve a common mission.

Start networking and go beyond the maze of online job postings: attend events, ask questions and get personal referrals. This solid approach will help you create a human connection to advance your career search.

Follow these 11 steps to enhance your network and grow your career potential.

1. Find Your Community

Use the online resources available through Veterans Service Organizations to find out about military reunions, locate friends and comrades, and get news on trends in Veteran employment:

- ▲ **Department of Veterans Affairs.** The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) website provides information to help you start building your network. You'll find details on benefits, including health, burial, life insurance, education, home loans, and vocational rehabilitation and employment services. Plus, the [VA for Vets website](#) – another benefit of VA – connects you to a variety of online career management resources.
- ▲ **Military.com Mentor Network.** The [Military.com Veteran Career Network](#) connects you to more than one million Veterans. Network with Veterans in the industries you are interested in and use Military Mentors to reach Veterans who can help you grow your career.
- ▲ **Women in Military Service for America Memorial.** The [Women in Military Service for America Memorial](#) is the only national memorial honoring all 1.8 million service women. This site provides access to names, addresses and photos through the memorial's register. By registering in the database, you can locate old friends and re-establish a network of allies.
- ▲ **LinkedIn.** Professional social networking site LinkedIn has launched a [new microsite](#) tailored with tips, tools and information to help Veterans find new opportunities, including a free, one-year Job Seeker subscription for all US Veterans and current service men and women. If you're not a member of LinkedIn, be sure to create a LinkedIn profile, update it with your military experience, and take advantage of the site's great tools and resources.

2. Organize Your Contacts

When starting to network, list all the individuals in your personal and professional networks along with their titles and contact information, how you know them, and how they can help your career search.

3. Take It Offline

Schedule a phone call or in-person meeting with previous and new contacts to gain and share information. The goal of these meetings—called informational interviews—is to build professional relationships, not to ask for a job. Once you impress them, hopefully they will consider you for available positions or refer you to others in their network who can assist you.

4. Remember the Rule of Sevens

The Rule of Sevens is simple: You have 7 seconds to make a first impression, 14 seconds to create interest, and 21 seconds to tell your story.

5. Keep Contacts Fresh

Touch base with key contacts every few weeks. By staying fresh in their minds, there is a greater chance that they will call you when they need someone with your expertise. Use a variety of means to stay connected. Always say thank you and check in to see if there is a way you can support them. Send an article about something relevant to both of you or to their career. In other words, find creative ways to stay connected.

6. Look for Volunteer and Educational Opportunities

A great way to connect with other service-minded people is through volunteer opportunities. In addition, classes—whether at a community college or another adult-education provider—are a great way to expand your skills and meet people who are working—or preparing to work—in your desired field.

7. Prepare Your Personal Brand

A first step to networking is determining your “personal brand” and developing your elevator speech – a one- or two-sentence summary of who you are, what you do, and what you have to offer. An elevator speech is a one-minute “commercial” that expresses what you do in a persuasive, compelling way (leaving the listener curious to know more about you). An elevator speech will serve you well in your job search and will help you to be prepared in any networking situation so you know what to say in any scenario. You never know when an unexpected encounter could lead you to your next job. When you’re preparing your pitch, it may be helpful to employ [Military.com’s Military Skills Translator](#), which will help you translate your skills into language that non-military members can understand.

8. Be Memorable Through Sincerity

The best way to be memorable is to show a sincere interest in the people you’re meeting. Listen to what they tell you, and ask them questions about themselves.

9. Remember Names and Details About Others

Develop creative techniques to remember your contacts’ names and write details about them on business cards you receive.

10. Follow Up

After an event, touch base with each person you met. If you promised to send them a person’s name, an article or a book, keep your word and send it.

11. Be Yourself

You don’t have to be a brilliant conversationalist or a fast-talking salesperson to be great at networking. You do have to be willing to take a risk and present yourself to the world. Establish momentum in ways that suit your personality.

Remember the following tips about what networking is and what it is not:

Networking is:

- ▲ Finding your community
- ▲ Developing long-term relationships
- ▲ Making introductions
- ▲ Looking for opportunities in new places
- ▲ Being thoughtful about which events to attend
- ▲ Being sincere to those you meet
- ▲ Remembering names and details about others

Networking is NOT:

- ▲ Finding someone with influence to pull strings
- ▲ Using others to get what you want
- ▲ Attending every single event possible
- ▲ Forcing someone to meet with you and help
- ▲ Providing false information about yourself
- ▲ Coming across as insincere or uninterested