

How do I Network?



Networking will be one of the most significant things you do to gain employment in Canada but what is it and how do you do it? Here are a few examples:

- Join the Ireland-Canada Chamber of Commerce if there is a branch in your city
- Join Linked-In
- Attend Irish community events (GAA, BC Irish Women's Network, St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, Edmonton Irish Club, Irish Cultural Society of Calgary etc.); at these events you will meet settled-Irish who may have advice on your job hunt.
- Don't be afraid to reach out—Irish who have come here before you want to help. Offer to take someone out for coffee or better still ask if you can bring coffee to his/her office to pick his/her brain for 15 minutes. Keep the time circumscribed so that the individual knows you are asking for just a fraction of his/her time. Ask questions—don't ask for a job. Ask how you can reach out to people in your sector, ask for opinions on your resume, ask for key sector tips.
- Join a meet-up in your sector. Ex: Accounting Meetups of Toronto, Engineers without Borders Vancouver. At these events you will meet people in your field. They may know of companies who are hiring.
- Reach out to recruitment agencies. Remember, HAYS is one of I/CAN's sponsors.

The Toronto Star offers these key tips from networking guru Donna Messer:

Do your homework

It's important to research the group or function beforehand.

Make an impression

While it's important to dress properly for a networking event — the standard can range from casual to formal business attire, depending on the event — what matters most is standing out so people remember you, Messer says. For women, she says, this may involve wearing a red jacket or striking scarf; for men, perhaps a bold tie or patterned shirt. Messer's own technique is to wear her glasses on top of her head. When you meet someone, she says, remember the other essentials of making a good impression — solid eye contact, a smile and a firm handshake.

Socializing strategies

To alleviate networking angst, Messer recommends engaging with people who are on their own, since they'll likely be more approachable than groups. She also suggests spending time by the event entrance to watch for people entering by themselves. If approaching a group, she says, wait until there's a lull in the conversation before asking to participate. Alternately, she adds, the food or coffee line is often a great place to start a conversation.

Be natural

While a popular approach to professional networking is the “elevator pitch” — a brief, precise and prepared summary of your background — Messer says this can sound like an infomercial. Think of exchanges as conversations, rather than opportunities to pitch, she says. Start with casual talk about the weather or traffic, or ask if the other person has ever been to a networking event. “People don't want to be sold to off the bat,” she says. “You have to build rapport, because people buy from and refer people they like.”

It's not about you

The best way to promote yourself at a networking event is to put others first, Messer says. Focus on what people mention.

