

How to Network Successfully Online

By Rachel Goldstein

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If you want to get your business name out there, nothing is better than referrals and networking. Networking is the act of passing someone's name on to another person. But, in the new world of technology, networking has taken on an entirely new face. Since this form of self-promotion could mean make or break for your freelancing career, I recommend you use some of the following pointers.

1. Write Articles - Write articles about your expertise and submit them to heavily trafficked web sites. Make sure that you are referenced in these articles. Something like this works best:

John Smith
Fake Company
Expert Web Designer
<http://www.fake-company.com/>
fake-company@server.com

Some web sites won't let you have all of this information written as a signature on the article, but they will let you have a summarized version. If not, at least insist on your name and website address being added to the article.

2. Become an Expert - There is a web site called All Experts (<http://www.allexperts.com/>). That is a great place to network. This site is a hub where people ask advice of experts. Take advantage of this marketplace where others in your field can ask advice of you. If these people are pleased with your expertise, you might receive future gigs from them.

3. Message Boards and Chat Rooms - Message boards and chat rooms attract individuals in need of advice. Take advantage of this. Just make sure not to blatantly market your services. This might infuriate people and you could get flamed or kicked out among other things. The way to network in this situation is to be as helpful and knowledgeable as you possibly can. If you are in a graphic design message board and someone is baffled about to use layers in Photoshop ... explain the process. You could maybe mention that you use Photoshop daily when running your design business. THEN at the bottom of the page use a signature. Find out about signatures in #4 below.

4. Signatures - Every email that you send out should contain a signature. A signature is at the end of your emails and should look something like this ...

John Smith
Fake Company
Providing Professional Brochures at a Discount Price! <http://www.fake-company.com/>
fake-company@server.com

You never know will need your design services, why risk missing out on a potential client?

5. Post Your Profiles - Yes, posting your profiles on the freelance job sites is a perfect way to network. How else better to get your name out in the freelance world than placing your name on a freelance site?

6. Reciprocal Link - If you have a web site, ask for a reciprocal link from others in your profession or similar professions. For example, if you are a graphic designer, ask for reciprocal links from fellow graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, etc. I get more traffic to All Freelance from reciprocal links than I do from search engines.

7. Introduce Yourself - Search and find other professional's websites and email them. Introduce yourself and your services to them. Let them know that you are available for work if they ever need to outsource. Ask questions. How long have you been freelancing? Where do you find clients? What is your specialty? Would they want extra work you have in the future? Etc.

8. Place your site in directories and search engines - It is good to get your name out in searchable directories ... this is much more preferable than to search engines that don't really pick up any good matches. I recommend going to the following web sites to get listed

- *<http://www.dmoz.org/>
- *<http://www.looksmart.com/>
- *<http://www.yahoo.com/>

For a listing of search engines to get listed in go to :

- *<http://www.searchiq.com/>
- *<http://www.beaucoup.com/>

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