

Reconnect with your professional network

Follow these tips to rekindle relationships with minimal amounts of awkwardness.

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Professional networking is key to career development, but there are only so many hours in the day you can devote to it. Ideally, you'd keep in regular contact with your entire network so that your connections are on tap when you need them for, say, a reference or a job lead. But, alas, we're all human, and things can get in the way of our even best laid plans.

"Keeping in touch with professionals in your sphere is a great thing to do, but more urgent tasks, like a pressing deadline, often take precedent," says Devora Zack, CEO of Only Connect Consulting and author of *Networking for People Who Hate Networking*. "A lot of times, staying connected with people falls to the bottom of your to-do list."



Follow these tips to catch up with old colleagues.

Another reason people lose touch? "Many people wait until they need something before they reach out to someone," says Nancy Ancowitz, career coach and author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead*.

Reconnecting with old contacts after a long period of silence, though, can be awkward. After all, there's a chance the person might not remember you very well. And when you're [asking someone for help](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/how-to-ask-for-a-helping-hand-hot-jobs) (https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/how-to-ask-for-a-helping-hand-hot-jobs), after you've let the relationship go cold for a long time, you might come off as self-serving.

However, by taking the right approach, you can rekindle relationships with professionals in your network with minimal amounts of cringing.

Choose the right method of communication

Messaging someone through social media is one way to break the ice, but "if you want to make a one-on-one reconnection with someone, my first choice would be to [send a personal email](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/never-write-in-professional-email) (https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/never-write-in-professional-email)," Zack says.

The exception? If you don't have the person's email address, consider sending the person a private message on social media—or, if you have a mutual connection, ask that individual to reintroduce you, suggests business-communication coach Patrick Donadio.

Ace the subject line

Think of your email's subject line as a carefully worded icebreaker. To craft it, "I recommend researching what the person has been up to," Zack says. A recent achievement, like a promotion, can be great fodder for a subject line (e.g., "Congratulations on your new position.")

There's also the simple approach, says Ancowitz, of simply stating your intention (e.g., "Your former colleague from Monster: would love to reconnect.")

Embrace the awkwardness

If it's been five years since you've spoken to the person, don't pretend like you're best friends, says Michelle Tillis Lederman, author of *Nail The Interview, Land The Job*. Acknowledge the radio silence ("I know it's been a while") and then proceed with your ask.

Make it personalized

Tailoring your email is a smart move—no one wants to feel like they're on the receiving end of a widely sent email. Ancowitz recommends weaving in something that you remember about the individual. "If you can recall their kids' names or the person's hobbies, that helps you create a targeted email," she says. And [express an interest in their life](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/questions-to-ask-successful-people) (<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/questions-to-ask-successful-people>)—don't make it entirely about you. Whatever you do, don't send a generic email to a bcc'd list of old acquaintances.

Keep it short and sweet

"Don't try and circumvent the real reason why you're reaching out," Zack advises. Indeed, being direct is more genuine than dancing around your purpose. "Tell the person that you're touching base because you're looking for a job [or a contact]," says Zack.

If possible, ask your old colleague for their advice—for instance, "I'm making changes to my resume before I start applying to jobs and would love your input." "It's a great way to forge a bond," says Ancowitz. "But don't write a novel." Your email should be only a few sentences; if it's longer, the recipient might not read it at all.

Offer something of value

Professional networking is a two-way street, meaning that if you're asking an old contact for something, you'll want to offer something in return, says Donadio. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture—it could be something small, like offering to introduce the person to someone in your sphere.

Meet in person

To truly rebuild a relationship, set up a time to grab coffee or drinks together, Donadio recommends. If the person doesn't live nearby, an industry event is a good opportunity to reconnect face to face, Zack says. ("Are you going to this year's expo? I'd love to meet up.")

Up your professional networking game

Networking can be tricky, especially when it's obvious that you need something from someone else. That said, everyone does it. Doing it tactfully will earn you major points both on the spot and down the line. If you're looking for a job and want help, put as many irons in the fire as possible. Want a tip? [Join Monster for free today](https://member.monster.com/) (<https://member.monster.com/>). As a member, you can upload up to five versions of your resume—each tailored to the types of jobs that interest you. Recruiters search Monster every day looking to fill top jobs with qualified candidates, just like you. Additionally, you can get job alerts sent directly to your inbox to cut down on time spent looking through ads. It's a great way to get more exposure and see what's out there.