

10 NETWORK AND BRAND BUILDING PROJECTS YOU CAN DO THIS YEAR

1. Write an Article or Blog Post

This gives you a perfect opportunity to reach out to people and interview them. You're offering people a platform for promoting their own brand and ideas. Most people will love you for it.

2. Host a Client Event

If you open it up to your colleagues to invite their clients too then you'll automatically have an opportunity to not only grow your relationships with your own clients and prospects, but also improve your relationships and brand with your colleagues and senior management. And yes, this is a great excuse to invite your management to attend – most senior managers are looking for ways to “stay close to the customer” and will be honored you asked.

3. Host a Conference

You can invite clients, service providers, industry experts, the general public, or whoever best serves your purpose. And you don't have to do all the heavy lifting on your own – coopt others as a steering committee and be sure to tap into any event planning or administrative support your organization may provide. And reserve some speaking slots for yourself, your top management and others you want to build relationships with.

4. Start a Network

Or you can take on a role in an existing network. In the process of starting a network of people who are interested in a common cause, you again have a great reason to reach out without feeling uncomfortable. They're all going to benefit.

5. Initiate a Group Learning Series

If you love to learn and there's an appetite among your colleagues to hear from experts or academics, then you could start a monthly “lunch and learn” or discussion over dinner series on a topic of your choosing. This will get you to reach out to all those cool people you've been wanting to meet and learn from! And if you're on a tight budget, what's to stop you from going to the expert's office and interviewing them with your smartphone and then showing that clip followed by a discussion? Or choose speakers who will be happy to join you for the price of lunch or dinner.

6. Start a Book Club

You could choose fiction or non-fiction around particular topics of interest. This way, you'll get to put out the word and meet people you might not have met otherwise. If you and two colleagues each invited 3 people, you'll have a great number to start with.

7. Put Together a Talent Showcase Event

There's loads of untapped talent in every organization, and people love having a chance to show a different side of themselves. Have it be for a worthy cause, and you'll likely be able to pack the house while having a lot of fun! And be sure to invite senior people as well as junior. It's time to let everyone's hair down!

8. Start a Cross-Company Initiative

When there's a common issue that affects all the players in your sector, then there's scope to gather people across those companies to brainstorm solutions and make progress. For example, the investment banking firms all had difficulty recruiting women into the business and someone put together an initiative that the top firms joined to take action. (And for the avoidance of doubt, this is not about collusion to fix prices or anything anti-competition!)

9. Plan a Celebration

If there's an anniversary coming up for your company or a notable accomplishment or milestone, you could offer to plan a gathering or event to commemorate or celebrate it. If it's a big deal, then you can get some very senior people involved to speak or even to be honored. Maybe even include some alums of the company who have since retired.

10. Organize a Speaker Series

One of my students got the attention of senior management and raised her profile substantially by proposing a personal and professional development speaker series at her company. This gave her the opportunity to poll her colleagues about their interests, to liaise with senior management, and to reach out to external speaker candidates. She teamed up with two others to make it more fun and to spread the work load.