



Tips for inclusive networking

As we seek to make meaningful connections with people, a more authentic and less transactional style of networking is needed.

Learning and understanding from the experience of others and building networks contribute to confidence and opportunities for advancement in the workplace. So, how can we ensure that we build inclusive networks where we benefit from diversity of perspective?

For a start, we can consider different types of people when **planning a networking event.**

Hold events within working hours

- Having events before or after work potentially excludes those with commitments outside of work that cannot be moved, particularly parents and carers

Use te reo Māori to open the event and welcome people

- Appropriately and authentically acknowledge New Zealand's biculturalism

Be clear in the invite about the purpose of the event and what people will get out of it

- People have busy lives and the attraction of free drinks and canapes is not always enough
- Give people plenty of detail about the topic, speakers, format etc so they know what to expect and will feel comfortable

Ensure that the event is not centred around alcohol

- Make sure there is selection of non-alcoholic drinks available
- Think of activities that don't involve alcohol for team building or client events

Consider those with accessibility or dietary requirements

- Ensure that venues are accessible and that people who are vegetarian, vegan and gluten free are catered for

Be intentional about making connections

- Use your influence to ensure people are included in conversations

Building your network is about making connections and bringing new perspectives into your life. There are huge benefits to be gained in tapping into others' experience and knowledge.

Adjust your mindset

- Focus on the opportunity to be curious and make connections with interesting people rather than on short-term transactional relationships

Prepare

- Prepare a couple of open-ended questions that will encourage conversations – they don't have to be profound, just genuine and authentic
 - What's your favourite thing about what you do?
 - What's the most exciting thing you are working on right now?
 - What problems need solving in your role?
- Consider the questions that people might ask you and be ready to answer them
- If you know some of the likely attendees that you would be interested in meeting, look up their LinkedIn profile see potential discussion points

Be generous

- Think about how you can help people you meet rather than how they can help you

Encourage others to attend

- Consider taking along a colleague who doesn't usually attend these events and who would find it interesting

Look for people not like you

- It is easy to be surrounded by people with the same experiences, background or opinion but there is more to be learnt and gained from connecting with people who bring a different perspective
- Maximise the connections you make by following up or connecting on LinkedIn

Maintain contact

- Keep in touch – this could be by meeting up or sending them articles that they could be interested in