Hiding behind technology: While the Internet can help you identify contacts, and social media and email can provide convenient ways to communicate, technology should not take the place of face-to-face interactions. Having hundreds of LinkedIn connections means nothing if you do not take the time to reach out and ask for conversations. Scheduling phone or Skype conversations and meeting for coffee or lunch provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue that technology is not able to replicate.

Presenting an unprofessional image: Your image matters even when you are not interviewing for a job. Posting unprofessional images on social media, or using inappropriate email addresses and phone greetings, give the impression that you are not ready for the professional world of work. Another turn-off is not dressing appropriately at conferences, business meetings and other networking events. Even a happy hour social gathering provides the opportunity to make a valuable connection, so consider what your appearance conveys about you. Another mistake is to not express gratitude for any information or assistance that is provided to you. Thanks can be expressed through a follow-up call or email letting them know what you did and how things turned out for you.
Your encounter will be made even more memorable by creating and carrying your own personal “business” cards that have your contact information on one side and a summary of your attributes on the back side.

So why is networking so important? According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 70% of jobs are filled by networking. The Wall Street Journal also indicates that 80% of job openings are unadvertised, and 90% are filled by employee referrals. Since networking is important for gathering information and contributing to others, be sure to avoid these common mistakes so that you can build and maintain relationships that will help you throughout your lifetime.

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http://careerservices.richmond.edu/about/tosmond/

Arriving late to events: Going to a networking event or social happy hour can be intimidating when you are not familiar with the program, organization, or participants. Nothing feels worse than walking into a crowded room of people who have already grouped together and are engaged in animated conversations. To make things more comfortable, arrive to your event a few minutes early, so that you can approach newcomers and help get the conversations started. If you decide to arrive with a colleague, make sure you don’t clump together and appear unapproachable to others. Divide and conquer so that you each meet new people, and then reconnect by introducing each other to the new contacts you just made.

Overlooking chance encounters: Many people miss out on the chance encounters that happen in our daily lives. Shopping at the grocery store, waiting for a car repair, or watching your kid’s soccer game, all provide opportunities for conversations (including networking) to take place. Be prepared to explain briefly what you do and what you are looking for but don’t dominate the conversation. Networking is a two-way street, so learn about your contact by listening and asking follow-up questions. You never know when your paths may cross again or when you have a reason to reach out.