



STRATEGIC NETWORKING TRENDS IN 2012



Report Authored by:
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Introduction



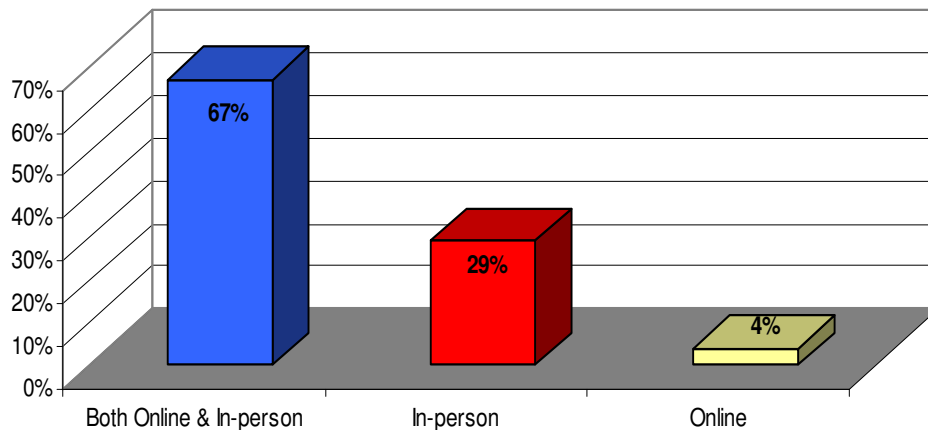
It's no secret that our professional networking landscape is changing at a rapid pace. It is easier than ever to connect with individuals all over the world. How are professionals navigating this new environment? How are they balancing online and in-person networking and creating truly strategic relationships?

Impact Instruction Group conducted a survey of **154 professionals** to determine how individuals are building strategic relationships, specifically focusing on trends in both the online and in-person networking environments. This report compiles the results of the survey and helps to paint a picture of the professional and social networking trends of professionals today.

Highlights

- **68%** of survey respondents use both an online and in-person networking strategy.
- The majority of survey respondents ranked **LinkedIn** as their number one professional networking tool with email coming in a close second.
- The majority of respondents use electronic tools on a **daily basis** to network.
- **80%** of survey respondents attend less than three in-person networking events in a month.
- A surprising **42%** believe that online networks have replaced in-person networking events.
- **96%** of respondents are likely to connect with a new contact via social networking tools after meeting them at an in-person event.
- The majority of respondents ranked **mentorship** as the most effective professional development training method.

1. Which strategy to do you find most effective in networking?



The majority of respondents believe that the most effective way to network is by finding a good balance between both online and in-person networking.

- **67%** of survey respondents find both an online and in-person networking strategy most effective.
- **29%** find in-person networking most effective.
- Only **4%** believe an online-only strategy is most effective.

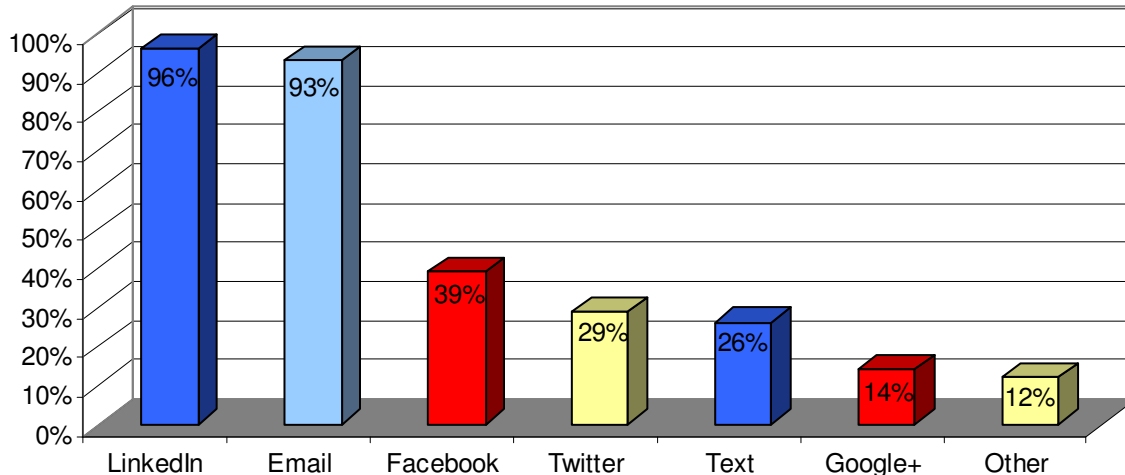
Impact Instruction Tip: Creating a Balanced Approach

Plan ahead and get organized. To manage your in-person networking, schedule one to three hours each month to research events that you want to attend, register and add them directly to your calendar. At Impact Instruction Group, we keep a separate media calendar (using Google calendar) for all networking-related events.

Additionally, take that time to identify and schedule meetings with the top contacts with whom you want to connect.

For your online networking, carve out a block of time in your weekly schedule to network online. Online networking can be time-consuming, but if you block specific time with limits, you will be more effective.

2. Which electronic tools do you use to network professionally? Check all that apply.

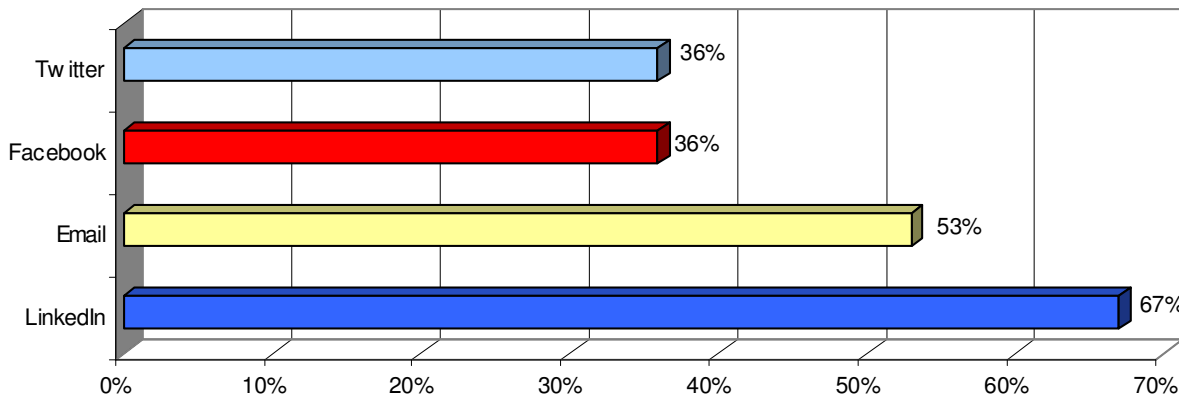


96% of survey respondents ranked LinkedIn as their #1 professional networking tool with email coming in a close second at **93%**. Following came Facebook, Twitter, text messaging and Google+. **12%** of our survey respondents chose other methods including online referrals, online sales sites, search engines and other online networks.

Impact Instruction Tip: Optimizing Social Media

If you do not have a LinkedIn account, it's time to get one, and get savvy. LinkedIn is a great way to connect with contacts, conduct research and be introduced to potential business. Other social media tools are great if you have the time to keep up with them, and a business that supports the efforts. For example, if LinkedIn is your primary tool, make sure your profile is complete – and maintained regularly – before moving onto other platforms. Text messaging is effective you have an established relationship with a connection, but not recommended as a first point of contact. Basic Internet searches for contact information can be time consuming. Consider the use of online sales tools like Jigsaw or Manta, to find contact information more effectively.

3. Of the tools listed in question #2, rank your top 3 in order of how effective you find them to be when building your network.



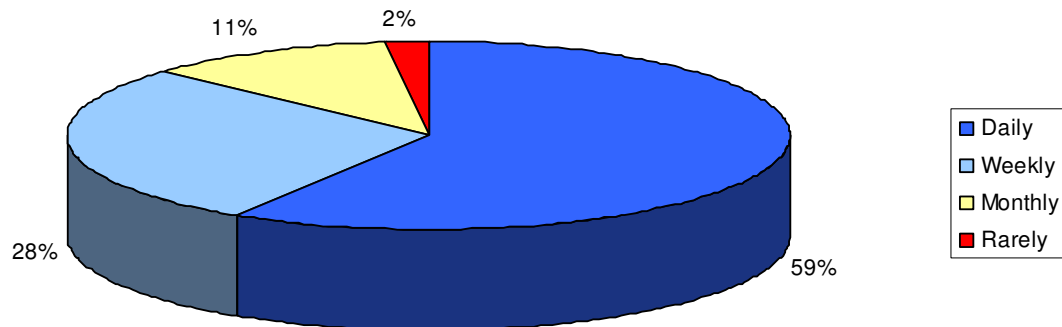
These tools were ranked by respondents in order of effectiveness for their relationship building:

1. LinkedIn
2. Email
3. Facebook and Twitter

Impact Instruction Tip: Electronic Tools Strategy

Creating the right strategy for the use of your tools is important. You may use LinkedIn inMail to connect, but not all LinkedIn members utilize that function. Some of the contacts may be on Twitter on a daily basis, while others do not have an account. With so many tools out there, and no clear-cut scientific formula as to how each individual uses these tools, it's important to create a multi-functional strategy approach while networking. At Impact Instruction, we use LinkedIn and Twitter. LinkedIn helps us to conduct research and connect over the longer-term. Twitter is fantastic for following thought-leaders in your industry, or your clients' industries. A good question to ask yourself: Which tools are going to be most likely used by the people I want to connect with?

4. How often do you use these tools to network?

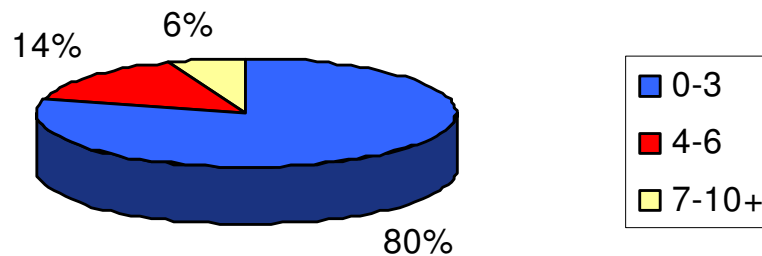


- The majority (**59%**) of respondents use electronic tools on a daily basis to network.
- **28%** use them weekly.
- **11%** use them monthly.
- **2%** rarely use electronic tools to network.

Impact Instruction Tip: Time Spent on Networking

The time you spend on networking could depend on the function of your role with your company. For sales, you want to have a daily strategy. For an engineer, you may be on a weekly networking schedule. But regardless of your role, never underestimate the power of a strong professional network; in fact, part of your unwritten job description is to build connections and relationships. It's a balanced formula of creating and nurturing relationships, as well as leveraging them when a connection is needed. Continue to foster and grow your network. You never know when you will need a new vendor, a new job, a new client or even the capability to connect two colleagues together.

5. How many in-person network events do you attend in a month?

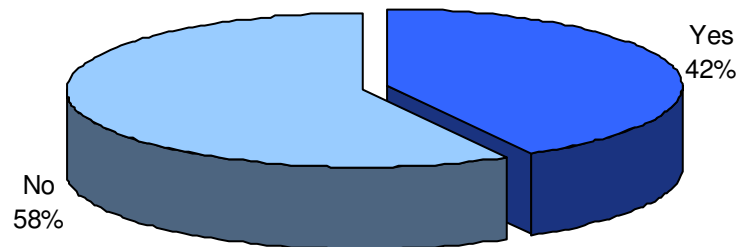


- **80%** of survey respondents attend less than three networking events in a month.
- **14%** attend 4-6 events and
- **6%** attend more than 7 events

Impact Instruction Tip: How Many Events to Attend

As important as online tools play in networking, nothing can replace a personal connection. Being a part of an organization and seeking out professional events is important to not only your own professional and career development, but also to your overall networking strategy. An event could be a conference, a lunch meeting with a mentor or new contact, or event an informal outing with friends. Plan out the right number of events for you ahead of time, and put them on your calendar! An approach that has worked for us is to select 3-5 groups that are key to relationship building, and follow their programming. We know ahead of time when their events will take place, and we attend anywhere from 4-6 events per month.

6. Do you feel that online networking communities have replaced many in-person networking events?

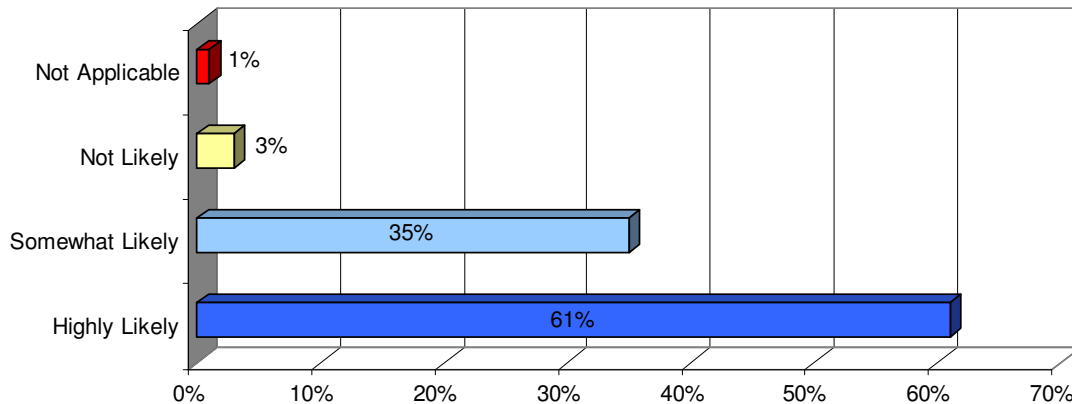


- **58%** of survey respondents do not feel that online networking communities have replaced many in-person networking events.
- However, a surprising **42%** did believe that online networks have taken over the in-person networking events.

Impact Instruction Tip: Online Networking Events

Online networking events and forums are effective for a number of people. The fact that 42% of respondents believe that online networks have replaced many in-person events says a lot. Attend these events online and you will make connections. But, as mentioned, do not underestimate the power of in-person connections. Creating a strategy that balances online and in-person events is critical to the successful growth of your network.

7. When you meet someone at an in-person event, how likely is it that you would connect with them via your social media outlets after the event?



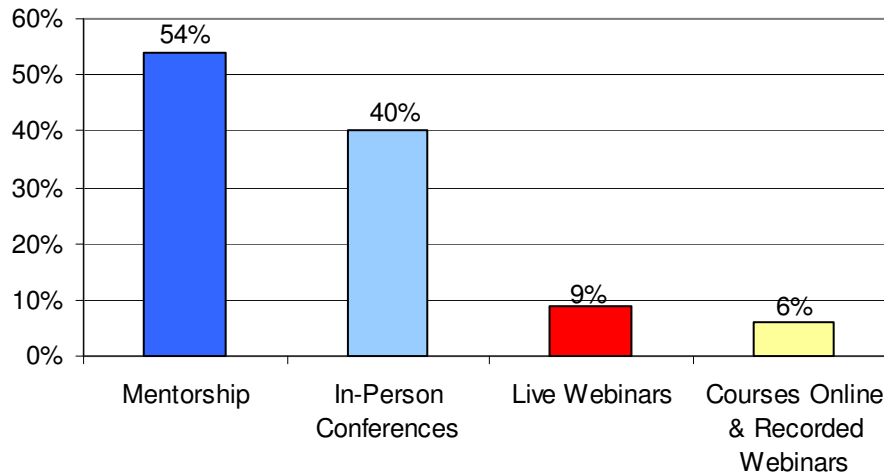
96% of survey respondents are likely to connect with a new contact after an event. (**61%** of survey respondents are highly likely and **35%** are somewhat likely.) Only **3%** would not connect with a new contact online.

Impact Instruction Tip: Social Media Connections

When you meet someone at an event, and you feel that they would be a good connection, it is recommended to connect with them via your professional networking tool, such as LinkedIn. Also, if you know that you are going to be meeting someone at an event for the first time, it may be a good idea to connect via LinkedIn prior to the event. It will provide a background for both parties, in addition to the ability to put a name to a face easily while at the event.

After an event, a follow-up strategy is recommended. It may be a combination of using an online tool to connect, a follow up email to schedule an appointment, and an in-person meeting to connect on a specific business objective. Be consistent in your follow up, schedule it in your calendar and continually work at building strategic relationships on an ongoing basis.

8. Rank the following methods that you feel best benefit you in professional development training, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least.



The following rankings for the methods that survey respondents felt **best** benefit them in their professional development training are as follows:

1. Mentorship – **54%**
2. In-person Conferences & Seminars – **40%**
3. Self guided online courses and recorded webinars – **9%**
4. Live webinars – **6%**

Impact Instruction Tip: Professional Development

Although online professional development is a critical part of your training, in-person mentoring and training sessions clearly took the lead as the most important methods that benefit the survey respondents' professional development training. Look for ways you can take advantage of all the methods that suit you. For example, if a professional organization's national conference is out of the budget, that organization may have a smaller regional event that's a better fit.

Demographics

AGE
54% Baby Boomers
38% Gen X
8% Gen Y

GENDER
69% Female
31% Male
1% Anonymous

REPRESENTATIVE INDUSTRIES
Consulting
Energy
Technology
Finance
Marketing
Retail
Entertainment
Fashion
Chemical
Aviation
Pharmaceuticals
Business Law



About Impact Instruction Group

Founded in 2007, Impact Instruction Group is a leading corporate training and development firm. The firm's multi-faceted business units include:

- **Custom Corporate Training & Development**
- **Strategic Leadership Excellence for Women**
- **Amy Franko, Speaker on Professional Development for Women in Business**

Impact Instruction Group designs programs to empower companies and leaders through custom learning experiences for business impact. The group also works with organizations to develop leadership training programs and professional development strategies for emerging women leaders. In 2010, the firm won the Apex Award of Excellence for training design. In addition, Amy Franko is one of a select few authorized by author Lois Frankel (of Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office fame) to create and deliver programs specific to her best-selling books. Impact Instruction Group is based in Columbus, Ohio.

How to Contact Us

To learn more about custom corporate training and development services, professional development programs designed for emerging women leaders, or to book Amy Franko for an event, contact Sarah Steele: sarah.steele@impactinstruction.com