

# Tips to Take Networking Online



*By Caroline Levchuck*

Is e-mail an effective way to meet new people? Probably not, says a recent study.

Via e-mail, researchers tested the theory that only six degrees of separation exist between any two people in the world. While the theory holds true in real life, they found that that wasn't the case in virtual reality. Only one in 50 e-mail chains reached their intended recipients, reported "The New York Times."

But, despite disappointing results, there ARE effective ways to network electronically. This week, Job Tip of the Day shares ideas on how to build your professional network without leaving your computer.

## **Go Back to School**

Most colleges and even some high schools have online communities specifically for alumni. Made up of people in a wide range of industries and occupations, these communities encourage fellow alums to reconnect and network.

Online alumni groups are a great way to test the waters if you're new to virtual communities. Since members have a shared experience -- their alma mater -- it's easier to join in the discussions.

If your college doesn't have an online alumni community, or you'd rather not join one, you may want to consider taking an online class.

Many schools offer online continuing education and conduct classes in everything from advertising to business to technology. You'll not only enhance your knowledge and build your resume, but you'll also meet other students with similar professional interests.

## **Find Communities With Common Interests**

No matter what your interest, there's likely an online community dedicated to it.

From astronomy to genealogy to '80s music, online communities cover every subject imaginable. Choose a topic you want to learn more about, or one that you're passionate about, and do a keyword search for a community related to it. Or, go to a Web site like Yahoo! Groups and browse their list of communities here: <http://groups.yahoo.com>.

To expand not just your personal but your professional network, join a community tailored to a specific industry or occupation.

Online communities are a great way to learn more about a profession. Once you find a group that has potential for networking, browse the messages to learn more about the industry and its career options. When you feel comfortable in the community, start posting your own messages. Then let the networking

being!

You can visit one of HotJobs' 34 industry communities here:  
<http://www.hotjobs.com/htdocs/client/splash/communities/>

### **Join Groups Designed to 'Meet and Greet'**

Some online communities are expressly for the purpose of meeting other professional colleagues. And those are perfect for networking.

To expand your professional network -- and help your job search -- join a community designed for people in your industry to meet one another. If you've recently relocated for a job or are planning to do so, you can even network in communities created specifically for people new to a city to get acquainted with one another.

One of the best aspects of online communities specifically designed for networking: All members are ready and willing to meet new people. What could be an easier way to build your professional network?