

bcoz**its**you

THE HUMAN-FIRST NETWORKING GUIDE

Build professional relationships with research, respect and consistency.
Use AI to refine your thinking - never to fake interest or mass-produce
messages.

2026 EDITION | FREE FOREVER | NO EMAIL REQUIRED

We help people who want to help themselves.

START HERE

Networking is not asking strangers for jobs

Networking is the practice of learning from people, contributing where you can, and building professional trust over time. A referral may eventually result from that trust. It should not be the opening demand.

The bcozitsyou rule

Do not use AI to invent a reason to contact someone. Decide why the person is genuinely relevant, write your own rough message, and use AI only to question, shorten or clarify it.

What this guide will help you do

- **Choose a clear networking goal** instead of collecting random connections.
- **Find relevant people** through organisations, roles, communities, universities and shared interests.
- **Research ethically** using public professional information.
- **Write messages in your own voice** and use AI as an editor, not a personality generator.
- **Follow up respectfully** without pressure, guilt or spam.
- **Track relationships** without treating people as transactions.
- **Turn conversations into learning**, action and mutual professional support.

What this guide will not do

- Promise replies, referrals, interviews, sponsorship or employment.
- Teach mass messaging, scraping, fake personalization or manipulation.
- Replace the work of reading profiles, understanding roles and forming your own questions.
- Encourage you to upload private conversations, personal data or confidential company material into AI tools.

01 | DIRECTION BEFORE OUTREACH

Define the purpose of your network

A useful network grows around a direction. Before searching for people, complete these five sentences in your own words:

- 1 **I am currently...** State your education, role or transition in one sentence.
- 2 **I am exploring...** Name one or two specific functions, industries or problems.
- 3 **I need to understand...** Identify a decision or knowledge gap, not a favour.
- 4 **I have already done...** List research, courses, projects, applications or conversations.
- 5 **I can contribute...** Offer a thoughtful question, relevant resource, event notes, feedback, introduction or genuine engagement.

Weak goal

I want to connect with successful people and get a job.

Stronger goal

I am a final-year finance student exploring commercial analytics roles in UK telecommunications. I want to understand which entry-level projects demonstrate useful SQL and stakeholder skills. I have compared ten job descriptions and built one small reporting project.

The three-network model

- **Learning network:** people one or two steps ahead who can explain the work and transition.
- **Peer network:** people at a similar stage who can exchange practice, resources and accountability.
- **Opportunity network:** recruiters, hiring managers, community organisers and practitioners connected to relevant work.

Do not ignore peers. Today's student, analyst or career switcher may become tomorrow's colleague, specialist, founder or hiring manager.

02 | FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Research before you request attention

Start with organisations and problems, not famous individuals. Build a small weekly list of people who are genuinely connected to what you are learning.

Free research routes

- **LinkedIn search:** role + organisation + location + university/alumni.
- **Company websites:** leadership pages, team blogs, case studies, events and vacancies.
- **Professional communities:** meetups, associations, university societies, open webinars and conferences.
- **Public work:** articles, talks, GitHub repositories, portfolios, reports, podcasts and comments.
- **Your existing circles:** classmates, colleagues, lecturers, neighbours, alumni and family connections. Ask for context, not automatic introductions.

Build a five-line research note

- What does this person actually do?
- What public work, post, talk or experience did I genuinely examine?
- Why is their perspective relevant to my current question?
- What can I ask that is specific and reasonably answerable?
- Can I learn the answer independently before contacting them?

AI refinement prompt

Use AI to challenge your research - not perform fake personalization.

I am considering contacting [role/person]. Here are my own notes from public sources: [PASTE YOUR NOTES]
My goal is: [GOAL] Ask me five questions that expose weak assumptions or missing research. Do not write the outreach message.

Privacy boundary

Use only public professional information. Do not infer sensitive personal facts, use private contact databases without a lawful purpose, or ask AI to profile someone's personality.

03 | GIVE PEOPLE CONTEXT

Your profile should explain who you are

Before outreach, make your public profile clear enough that a recipient can understand you in thirty seconds. Credibility does not require an impressive title. It requires consistency between what you say, what you are learning and what you can show.

Minimum LinkedIn profile

- **Photo:** clear, recent and professional enough for your field.
- **Headline:** current identity + direction + useful skills. Avoid "guru", "visionary" and unsupported superlatives.
- **About:** present situation, area of interest, evidence of work and what you are learning next.
- **Experience:** explain outcomes, responsibilities and context honestly.
- **Projects:** show practical work, even when self-directed.
- **Featured section:** link to one or two pieces of evidence, not a gallery of certificates.
- **Contact and privacy:** reveal only what you are comfortable making public.

Headline example

Business analysis graduate | Building SQL, process mapping and stakeholder communication through practical projects | Exploring UK telecom and services roles

AI refinement prompt

Ask AI to audit evidence, not manufacture authority.

Review my LinkedIn About section below. Mark: (1) vague claims, (2) claims without evidence, (3) jargon, and (4) sentences that do not sound natural. Suggest questions I should answer before I rewrite it. Do not rewrite it yet. [PASTE YOUR DRAFT]

The final profile must remain yours. Reject invented achievements, inflated adjectives and skills you cannot demonstrate.

04 | WRITE LIKE A HUMAN

The four-part message

A good first message is short because the recipient has not agreed to a long conversation.

- 1 **Context:** who you are and how you found them.
- 2 **Specific relevance:** the real post, role, talk, project or shared context you examined.
- 3 **Small question:** one answerable question that reflects prior effort.
- 4 **Easy exit:** no pressure, urgency, guilt or assumed obligation.

Connection request

Hello Anika - I am a final-year economics student exploring pricing analytics. Your post on moving from research into telecom analytics clarified the importance of commercial context. I would value staying connected as I build a small pricing project.

After acceptance

Thank you for connecting. I compared several analyst vacancies and noticed stakeholder communication appears as often as SQL. In your first year, which type of project helped you demonstrate both? Even one example would help me focus my practice.

Avoid these openings

- "I came across your impressive profile" when you cannot name what you read.
- "Can you refer me?" before any conversation or evidence of fit.
- "Can I pick your brain?" without a defined question or time boundary.
- "I need urgent help" when the recipient did not create the deadline.
- A long autobiography followed by several questions.
- AI-written praise, exaggerated admiration or a style you would never use in conversation.

AI refinement prompt

Refine a message you already wrote.

Below is my own outreach draft and the public note it is based on. DRAFT: [PASTE] SOURCE NOTE: [PASTE] Keep my meaning and natural voice. Identify anything generic, flattering, demanding, unverifiable or too long. Then provide a version under [200] characters. Do not add facts or enthusiasm I did not express.

05 | TEMPLATES TO ADAPT

Use structure, never copy blindly

Templates are starting points. Replace every bracket with something true. If you cannot personalize honestly, do more research or do not send the message.

Recruiter

Message	Hello [Name] - I am a [current situation] applying for [specific role type]. I have [one relevant evidence point]. Before I apply, may I ask whether [one precise eligibility/skills question]? I have checked [source] but could not confirm this point.
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Hiring manager or practitioner

Message	Hello [Name] - your [post/talk/project] helped me understand [specific lesson]. I am building [small relevant project] and found [specific difficulty]. In your team, what evidence would show that a junior candidate understands this well enough to contribute?
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Alumnus

Message	Hello [Name] - we both studied at [institution], and I noticed your move from [starting point] into [field]. I am exploring a similar direction and have already [specific effort]. What assumption about the transition did you have to correct?
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Peer

Message	Hello [Name] - I saw that you are also preparing for [field/exam/role]. I am currently working on [specific task]. If useful, I would be happy to exchange feedback or compare resources after we each complete a first draft.
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Mentor request - only after interaction

Message	Your earlier advice about [topic] helped me [action and result]. I am continuing independently and will not expect frequent replies. Would you be comfortable if I sent one focused progress update or question every [period]? It is completely fine if you do not have capacity.
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06 | FOLLOW UP WITHOUT CHASING

Silence is not a personal rejection

People miss messages, have no capacity, cannot answer, or simply choose not to engage. You are not entitled to a response.

A respectful cadence

- **Day 0:** send one concise, researched message.
- **Day 7-10:** send one useful follow-up if the question still matters.
- **After that:** stop. Continue learning and engage naturally with relevant public work.
- **When they reply:** acknowledge the answer, act on it, and later report the result briefly.

Follow-up

Hello [Name] - one gentle follow-up in case this was buried. I have since completed [specific action], which answered part of my question. I am still trying to understand [smaller remaining question]. No problem at all if you do not have capacity.

Prepare for a conversation

- Know what you want to learn and keep to the agreed time.
- Prepare three questions but prioritise the most important one.
- Do not secretly record or publish the conversation.
- Take concise notes and ask before sharing anything attributed to them.
- Do not turn the final minute into a referral request.
- Send a short thank-you that names the action you will take.

Best thank-you

Thank you for explaining why portfolio context matters more than the dashboard alone. I will rewrite my project note to show the decision, user and limitation, then test it with two peers. I appreciate your time.

07 | AI AS AN EDITOR AND PRACTICE PARTNER

Human idea first. AI refinement second.

AI can improve preparation, clarity and reflection. It cannot supply genuine interest, lived experience or trust. Begin with your own goal, research notes, question and draft.

Useful AI workflows

- **Research-gap check:** ask what public information you have missed, then verify it yourself.
- **Message critique:** identify generic language, hidden demands, unnecessary length and unsupported claims.
- **Tone comparison:** compare direct, warm and formal versions without changing the facts.
- **Role-play:** practise answering "Why are you contacting me?" or handling a short reply.
- **Question improvement:** turn broad questions into smaller questions after you supply the context.
- **Conversation reflection:** summarise your own notes into actions without uploading private details.

The CRAFT prompt framework

- **C - Context:** who you are and what you are trying to do.
- **R - Raw material:** your notes and your own draft.
- **A - Assignment:** critique, shorten, question or compare.
- **F - Facts boundary:** add nothing and flag uncertainty.
- **T - Tone and test:** natural tone plus a checklist for you to review.

AI refinement prompt

Complete message audit

Context: [WHO I AM + GOAL] Raw material: [MY RESEARCH NOTES + MY DRAFT] Assignment: Critique the draft before revising it. Facts boundary: Add no facts, praise or claims. Flag anything unverifiable. Tone and test: Keep it respectful and natural. After revising, list three checks I must perform before sending.

Never paste

Private messages without permission, CVs containing unnecessary personal data, confidential employer information, login details, government IDs, health information or another person's sensitive data.

08 | A SMALL, RESPONSIBLE TOOLKIT

You do not need twenty tools

Start free. Add a paid tool only when a repeated need justifies it. Features and pricing change, so check the provider before relying on any tool.

Purpose	Simple tools	Human responsibility
Find people	LinkedIn search, company sites, alumni pages, Google	Choose relevance; do not scrape or mass-add.
Understand context	Public posts, talks, reports, podcasts, job descriptions	Read the source. AI summaries are not evidence.
Refine writing	ChatGPT, Grammarly or the editor you already use	Supply your own draft and verify every sentence.
Track follow-up	Spreadsheet, Notion, Trello or a paper notebook	Store minimal information and respect privacy.
Practise	ChatGPT voice/text role-play, a peer, university careers service	Do not confuse simulated confidence with real feedback.

A spreadsheet is enough

Track only: name, role/context, why relevant, date contacted, last interaction, next respectful action, and what you learned. Do not maintain invasive personal profiles.

09 | PRACTICE PLAN

A 30-day relationship-building routine

Quality matters more than volume. The target is not a connection count. It is better research, clearer communication and a few real professional relationships.

Week 1 - Direction and profile

- Complete the five-sentence networking objective.
- Choose one field, problem or role family to explore.
- Remove unsupported claims from your profile.
- Publish or feature one small piece of relevant work.

Week 2 - Listen and learn

- Identify ten relevant practitioners, peers or alumni.
- Read at least one substantive public item from five of them.
- Write research notes and three questions you can partly answer yourself.
- Attend one webinar, community session or professional event.

Week 3 - Thoughtful outreach

- Send no more than three carefully researched messages.
- Contact at least one peer, not only senior professionals.
- Use AI to critique your own drafts, then make the final decision yourself.
- Record what you sent and why.

Week 4 - Contribute and reflect

- Act on any advice you received.
- Share one useful lesson or project update without exposing private conversations.
- Thank anyone who helped and report the action taken.
- Review response quality, not response quantity. Improve your research and questions.

Monthly test

Can you name three things you learned, two actions you completed, one person you helped, and one assumption you changed? If not, more connection requests will not solve the problem.

10 | REALISTIC SCENARIOS

Choose the next action that fits the situation

Student with no experience

Do not lead with what you lack. Build one small project, attend an open session, ask practitioners how beginners demonstrate the underlying skill, and form a peer practice group.

International student seeking sponsorship

Do not message strangers asking them to sponsor you. Research eligible roles, employer history, required skill depth and timing. Ask specific questions about the work and hiring process. Networking cannot override immigration rules or weak role fit.

Career switcher with financial responsibilities

Use conversations to test the transition before resigning. Speak with people who made similar moves, compare entry requirements, build evidence alongside current work and define the financial boundary for experimentation.

Person with strong skills but weak communication

Prepare one-minute explanations of projects, practise with peers and AI role-play, then test the explanation with a real person. Ask for feedback on clarity, not reassurance.

No replies

Check relevance, research quality, message length, profile clarity and the size of your request. Then improve your work and widen the network through communities and peers. Do not automate more volume.

A reply that says no

Thank them and stop. A respectful no preserves dignity and may preserve the relationship. Do not argue, ask them to justify it or immediately request another contact.

11 | VERIFIED RESOURCES

Learn from sources, not personalities alone

These links were checked in July 2026. Platforms change; use the principle even when a button or limit changes.

Official guidance

- [LinkedIn: Personalize invitations to connect](#)
- [LinkedIn: Find people you know and use search](#)
- [LinkedIn for Good: Expand your network](#)
- [OpenAI: Prompt engineering best practices for ChatGPT](#)
- [OpenAI: How to create a good prompt](#)
- [OpenAI: ChatGPT Data Controls](#)

Optional video learning

Creator videos can be useful demonstrations, but they are not rules. Check the date, separate evidence from marketing, and never buy a tool because one creator recommends it.

- [YouTube search: Jeff Su - LinkedIn networking](#)
- [YouTube search: Self Made Millennial - networking](#)
- [YouTube search: LinkedIn official networking](#)
- [YouTube search: OpenAI official prompting](#)

Video test

After watching, write: What was demonstrated? What evidence was shown? What is opinion? What will I test? What will I ignore?

12 | SEND CHECKLIST

Before you contact anyone

- I can explain why this person is relevant without using generic praise.
- I read the original public source rather than only an AI summary.
- I attempted to answer the question independently.
- My request is small, specific and appropriate for a first interaction.
- Every factual claim is true and verifiable.
- The message sounds like me.
- I removed pressure, urgency, guilt and assumed obligation.
- I did not include sensitive information.
- I will accept silence or a no respectfully.
- I know the action I will take if they reply.

Reflection after a conversation

- What did I learn that changes my next action?
- What advice requires independent verification?
- What did I promise to do?
- When will I complete it?
- How can I thank the person without asking for another favour?
- Can I help a peer with something I learned?

"A network is not a shortcut around the work. It is a community in which better work, honest questions and useful relationships can grow."

Your next step

Complete your networking objective, improve one piece of public evidence, research five relevant people and send one message you would be comfortable reading aloud in the Sunday webinar.

Free forever. No email required. If this guide helps you, share the original bcozitsyou link so others receive the current edition.