

Connecting Through Your Story

Build meaningful career connections in a way that feels like you.

Career movement rarely comes from one perfect application. It comes from clarity, conversations, and relationships that help you see what is possible.

01 · KNOW

Who am I?

Name what matters, how you work, and the value you create.



02 · TELL

What is my story?

Translate that identity into language other people can understand.



03 · SHARE

Can people find it?

Make your story discoverable in your resume and LinkedIn.



04 · CONNECT

Who helps it move?

Bring the story into real conversations and relationships.



1 Networking, without becoming a “networker”

Maybe you hate networking. Maybe selling yourself feels awkward. Maybe asking for help feels vulnerable. Or maybe you enjoy meeting people, but the second a conversation has an agenda, you want out.

That is not a problem to fix. The goal is not to collect contacts or ask people for jobs. It is to have genuine conversations that help you understand yourself, understand what is out there, build real relationships, and create enough movement that the right opportunities have a chance to find you.

2 Use this as a conversation system



BEFORE

Choose your intention.

What would make this worthwhile?



DURING

Stay curious.

Share enough context. Listen for signal.



AFTER

Follow the thread.

Notice what shifted and what to do next.



REMEMBER

Every conversation counts. Some teach you something. Some deepen a relationship. Some open a door now. Others matter later.



THE GOAL

Create movement toward work that fits.

Not more networking. More clarity, better conversations, and stronger relationships.

3 This guide is for you if...



NETWORKING FEELS FORCED

You want a way to connect that feels genuine instead of transactional.



YOU ARE STILL GETTING CLEAR

You do not have the perfect title or destination yet, but you know conversation can help.



GOOD CONVERSATIONS STALL

You meet interesting people, but you are not always sure how to turn insight into movement.



YOU ALREADY HAVE A STORY

This guide helps you put it into conversation. Bring your story forward, then let each conversation teach you something new.

A BETTERMEANT BELIEF

The right career move gets clearer as you move.

You do not need every answer before you start. Conversation is part of how you discover the answer.

STEP 1

Find Your Natural Approach

Build connections in a way that works with your wiring, not against it.

1 Start with what is true for you

There is no single right way to build relationships. Some people love meeting strangers. Some would rather have one deep conversation with someone they already know. Some are natural storytellers. Others connect by listening, helping, or asking great questions.



WHAT MAKES THIS HARD?

- ☐ Selling yourself
- ☐ Asking for help
- ☐ Not knowing exactly what you want yet
- ☐ Reaching out after a long time
- ☐ Feeling like you are using someone
- ☐ Talking to people you do not know
- ☐ Knowing how to ask for something
- ☐ Knowing when to end the conversation



WHAT DO YOU NATURALLY BRING?

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☐ Listening
- ☐ Warmth
- ☐ Humor
- ☐ Storytelling
- ☐ Helping
- ☐ Connecting people
- ☐ Thinking things through together



BETTERMEANT REFRAME

Do not build your strategy around the part of connecting you hate most. Build it around what- already feels like you.



A REAL EXAMPLE

"I lean into what is natural for me, which is curiosity. I love learning, meeting people, understanding how things work, and asking questions. So I approach career conversations with genuine curiosity about the person, the work, the company, the problem they are solving, and what they are seeing in the market."



TRY THIS

If you stopped trying to "network," how would you naturally build relationships instead?



WATCH FOR

Performing.
Overexplaining.
Asking for help
before you know
what kind of help
you want.



AIM FOR

Connection + curiosity + enough context. You do not need a perfect pitch. You need a natural place to start.

2 Choose your natural way in



CURIOSITY

Ask questions and learn how someone sees the world.



LISTENING

Create a conversation where the other person feels genuinely heard.



STORYTELLING

Share a useful piece of your experience that gives the conversation context.



CONNECTING

Notice people, ideas, and pathways that belong together.

MY NATURAL STRATEGY

When I connect, I want it to feel...

STEP 2

Decide What Movement Looks Like

Every conversation can create movement, even when it does not lead to a job.

One of the fastest ways to make a career conversation uncomfortable is to make the unspoken goal:

“Can this person get me a job?” Try a different question instead.



ASK A BETTER QUESTION

How could this conversation move me forward?



LEARN

Get perspective

Information, feedback, market context, a role you did not know existed, or a clearer read on what is changing.



CONNECT

Build a relationship

Reconnect, deepen trust, practice your story, or simply spend time with someone whose perspective matters.



OPEN A DOOR

Ask for a next step

When your direction is clearer, ask who they would talk to, what they would explore, or whether an introduction makes sense.

2 Let the ask evolve with your clarity

STAGE	WHAT YOU NEED	WHAT IT CAN SOUND LIKE
Early	Perspective and possibilities	“I am trying to understand where someone with my experience might fit.”
Middle	Patterns, tradeoffs, real context	“I keep hearing X. Does that match what you are seeing?”
Later	Specific pathways and people	“I am focusing on X roles at Y kinds of companies. Who would you talk to?”



BEFORE YOU REACH OUT

What would make this conversation worthwhile even if no job came from it?

Name what would make this conversation useful on its own. Think learning, clarity, a deeper relationship, a more specific next step, or a better sense of fit.

MOVEMENT CAN ALSO MEAN

Clarity

A new title

A company to explore

An assumption challenged

Realizing you **do not** want the thing you thought you wanted counts too.

STEP 3

Build Your Relationship Map

Start with who matters and why, then work outward.

You probably know more useful people than you think.

The goal is not to make a list of everyone you have ever met. It is to identify people who could help you learn something, see something differently, or explore where you might go next.



START CLOSE

People who already know you can help you practice your story, hear what resonates, and get clearer before you work outward.

ASK YOURSELF

- Who would I genuinely enjoy reconnecting with?
- Who knows my work well enough to tell me the truth?
- Who has a perspective I respect?
- Who works in a world I want to understand?
- Who might see possibilities for me I do not see myself?

3 Four roles to look for



MIRRORS

Know you

Reflect your strengths, tell you the truth, challenge assumptions, and remind you what you are good at.



CONNECTORS

Know people + pathways

See relationships you do not, connect dots, and widen your world.



INSIDERS

Know the place

Understand a company, team, function, role, or industry beyond what a job description can tell you.



CATALYSTS

Create movement

Hire, sponsor, advocate, refer, introduce, or simply expand what feels possible.

4 Make your first map

PERSON	WHY THEM?	WHAT COULD I LEARN?	ROLE



KEEP IT HUMAN

One person may play more than one role. Pick people you would genuinely want to talk with, not people who look impressive on a spreadsheet.

STEP 4

Reach Out in a Way That Feels Natural

You do not need the perfect message. You need a genuine place to start.

CONNECTION

Why them?

What makes this person worth reaching out to?



CONTEXT

What are you navigating?

Give enough of your story for them to understand where you are.



SMALL ASK

What would help?

Make the ask specific and easy to respond to.



EXAMPLE WAYS TO COMBINE THEM

RECONNECT

"Hi Jan. It has been a while. I am starting to explore what is next and would love to catch up and get your perspective. Any chance you have 20 minutes sometime soon?"

PERSPECTIVE ASK

"I am really interested in operations roles with growing companies. You know that space well, so I would love to hear what you are seeing and whether there are people or companies you think I should learn from."

SECOND-DEGREE CONNECTION

"Jan suggested I reach out. I am exploring organizational development roles, and she thought your path might give me a different perspective. If you are open to it, I would love to hear how you got where you are."



AVOID

"Do you know of any jobs?"

It is too broad and puts the work on the other person. The clearer your story is, the easier it is for someone else to think, "I know exactly who you should talk to."

DRAFT YOURS

My reach-out

Connection + Context + Small Ask



5 Make the message easy to receive



SHORT

Enough context to make sense. Not your whole career history.



PERSONAL

Make it clear why you chose **them**, not just anyone.



EASY

Ask for something small enough that saying yes feels simple.

BEFORE YOU HIT SEND



Sounds like me?

Not like a networking template.



Why them?

Clear and specific.



Enough context?

Just enough to orient them.



Small ask?

Easy to understand and answer.



KEEP THIS IN MIND

The clearer your story is, the easier it is for someone else to see where you might fit.

STEP 5

Your 5-Minute Conversation Prep.

Go in with a little intention and a lot of room for curiosity.

1

CONTEXT

What do I want them to understand about me?



Your 30-second version. Not your whole story.

2

CURIOSITY

What am I genuinely curious to learn?



Choose two or three questions you actually care about.

3

MOVEMENT

What would make this worthwhile?



Clarity, perspective, a new idea, a relationship, or a next step.

6

Questions that create better conversations



EXPLORE THE WORLD

- What are you seeing in the market right now?
- What do you enjoy most about your work?
- What has changed most in this space over the last year?
- What do people misunderstand about this role or company?



EXPLORE YOUR FIT

- Given what you know about me, where could my experience be valuable?
- When you hear me describe what I am looking for, what do you hear?
- What am I not considering that you think I should?
- Who do you think I should be learning from?



STAY OPEN

The best conversations leave room for something unexpected. You may go in to learn one thing and come away with a completely different possibility.



YOUR ONLY JOB IN THE ROOM

Share enough context. Stay curious. Listen closely. Notice what gives you energy and what does not.



A 30-SECOND CONTEXT CAN BE THIS SIMPLE

"I have spent a lot of my career helping growing companies bring structure when things get messy. I am starting to think about what is next, and I would love your perspective on where that experience could be useful."



REMEMBER

You do not need to plan the whole conversation. Know what you want to share, choose a few questions, and leave room for the unexpected.



SHARE

Enough for them to understand you.



ASK

Questions you actually care about.



NOTICE

What gives you energy and what changes.

STEP 6

Follow the Thread

The conversation may be over. The learning is not.

Take a few minutes while the conversation is fresh. Every conversation gives you information about the market, the work, and yourself.



WHAT STAYED WITH ME?

What did I learn, notice, hear, or feel that I do not want to forget?



WHAT SHIFTED?

Did I get clearer about what I want, or what I do not want?



WHAT DO I WANT TO FOLLOW?

Is there a person, question, company, role, or idea worth exploring?

7 Listen for the signal underneath the conversation

NOTICE	WHAT IT MIGHT TELL YOU
 Energy	What topics, problems, or environments made you lean in?
 Resistance	What turned you off, felt heavy, or made you want to pull away?
 Language	What words did they use to describe you, your strengths, or your experience?
 Surprise	What did you hear that challenged your assumptions or expanded what feels possible?



MOVEMENT IS NOT ONLY A NEXT STEP

Clarity, a new perspective, or realizing something is not right for you all count as movement too.



CONVERSATION TRACKER

PERSON	WHAT I LEARNED	WHAT CHANGED	FOLLOW

STEP 7

Stay in the Relationship.

Some connections matter long after the first conversation.

1

CLOSE THE LOOP

Thank them. Tell them what was useful.

If they made an introduction or you acted on something they suggested, let them know what happened.

2

STAY CONNECTED

You do not need a reason every time.

Send the occasional note, share something that made you think of them, congratulate them, or simply check in.

3

LET RECIPROCITY HAPPEN NATURALLY

Healthy networks are ecosystems.

Sometimes you are receiving. Sometimes you are helping. Sometimes you are connecting someone else. It does not have to be perfectly reciprocal in every moment.

THE RELATIONSHIP ECOSYSTEM



8

Simple follow-up language

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

"Thank you again. Your point about X really stayed with me. I am going to follow up on Y, and I will let you know where it leads."

LATER

"I saw this and thought of our conversation. Hope you are doing well. Quick update: I ended up exploring X, and it has been really useful."

WHO DO I WANT TO KEEP IN MY WORLD?

Think about the conversations you have had so far. Who would you genuinely like to stay connected with, and what would staying connected naturally look like for you?

CLOSING

What Is Your Map Showing You?

After a handful of conversations, stop looking at each one separately. Look for what is starting to repeat.



WHAT KEEPS SHOWING UP?

Roles, companies, industries, ideas, or possibilities



WHAT AM I LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF?

Energy, strengths, values, and what people consistently notice



WHAT IS CHANGING?

What am I more interested in now?
What am I ruling out?



WHERE MIGHT MY MAP BE POINTING NEXT?

A person, role, company, experiment, or decision



THIS IS NOT GOING BACKWARD

Your answers may send you back to your story, resume, or LinkedIn profile. That is the point. Every conversation gives you more information, and your map gets clearer as you move.

9 Your career conversation system



KNOW

Start with you

How do I naturally connect?



MOVE

Choose an intention

Learn, connect, or open a door.



FOLLOW

Notice the signal

What changed, and what wants attention next?

THE POINT OF ALL OF THIS

Understand yourself more clearly. Build genuine relationships. Create enough movement to discover opportunities you may not have found on your own.



WHAT'S NEXT · GUIDE 5

Speak Your Story: Interviewing. Bring the same clarity into the room when it matters most.