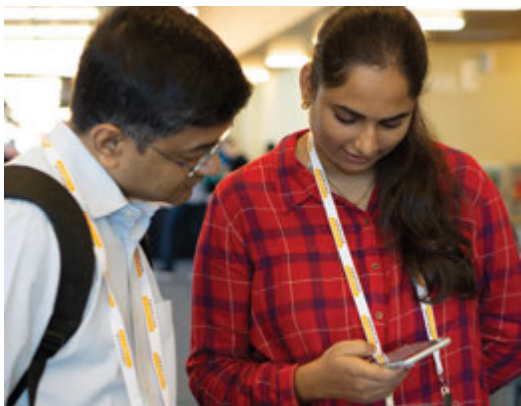


Networking involves more than just meeting someone at a conference and then never speaking to them again. In fact, the majority of “networking” takes place following the initial interaction. But most people are mystified about how to actually follow up and what to say. After all, once you exchange pleasantries and learn about the fundamentals of each other – what you do, what you studied, what you want to do in the future – what else is there to talk about? Turns out, there is plenty, and this gives us fertile ground in the following-up-phase of networking. So for any of the people who you met at the MRS Fall Meeting, here are a few ways you can follow up with them to keep the networking and conversations going, flowing, and growing. Not that the majority of these take place via email messages, but could be applied to other types of correspondence as well, such as texts, whatsapp messages, or LinkedIn notifications. The type of correspondence depends entirely on the communications preference of the person with whom you are building this alliance.


1

Connect with them on LinkedIn.

You want to keep apprised of your new connection's activities and achievements, and vice versa, they want that from you as well. So make sure you Connect with them so both parties are aware of what's happening in each other's lives. And when you get a notification in your LinkedIn feed, that this person just got a promotion, published a new post, or won an award, now you have something fresh to comment on and discuss with them.

2

Introduce new information about yourself.

Perhaps since you last spoke with the person, you finished a project, published a paper, got an A on a course, learned a new skill or technique, started a new class, read an interesting article, or won the Nobel Prize. There are always milestones about yourself you can share, whether you are an undergrad, grad student, or 45 years in to your career. So let them know about your achievements. This is important information for them to have because it showcases what a talented, driven, ambitious professional you are, and adds to your problem-solving abilities. It is not bragging- you are sharing new facts about yourself that they need to know if they are to engage you further (perhaps for employment in the future).

3

Introduce new information about them.

This requires a bit of detective work on your part, which you should be doing anyway, as you want to customize your follow ups. Take a look at their LinkedIn or ResearchGate profile, review their publications list, or even do a Google News search to learn what is new about them. And then make a note of that in your follow up correspondence. Perhaps they just published a new paper or are speaking at a conference. Maybe they just started teaching a new course. Or perchance they won the Nobel Prize (or two). Mention these new facts and of course, congratulate them on their accomplishments. Show them that you are thinking of them and are invested in their professional victory.

4

Give them an action item.

This should be in the form of a question, usually a yes or no inquiry, that requires them to use no more than 30 seconds of their brain power. Don't ask them a question that requires them to write a dissertation, as they won't respond. Instead, inquire about their current project – “I read in the MRS Bulletin that you recently started focusing your materials expertise on better understanding the nature of cancer. How fascinating! Do you anticipate collaborating with more life scientists in the future?” This query demonstrates that you are keeping yourself apprised of their efforts and advancements, that you are legitimately interested in their work, and it even hints that you might be interested in joining them in the future.

5

Offer them something of value.

While the umbrella aim of the whole follow up is to deliver value (namely that you can and will help them and are invested in the alliance for a lifetime), it is always a good idea to offer something specific that can aid them right now. Be seen as a resource by offering resources such as articles or papers, videos, information about a new conference or journal, or even an introduction to someone you think would be good for them to network with. If they mentioned in your conversation that they are applying for a grant to support multidisciplinary teaming arrangements to explore cancer growth, then see if you can find them something to help them with this, such as an article concerning this type of enterprise. They will greatly appreciate that you went out of your way to help them, and the gesture will go a long way to solidifying and fortifying your partnership with them.

About the Author: Alaina G. Levine is an award-winning entrepreneur, international keynote speaker, STEM career consultant, science writer, corporate comedian, and author of *Networking for Nerds* (Wiley, 2015), which beat out Einstein (really!) for the honor of being named one of the Top 5 Books of 2015 by *Physics Today Magazine*. She is a regular speaker and consultant for MRS. @AlainaGLevine