Technology: Tools to Prepare for In-person and Virtual Networking

Technology and how we use it has changed in the last three years, affecting how we network with others. Touchless and paperless technology that was necessary during the height of the lockdown is now a part of our daily routine. Are you prepared to utilize these new networking technologies, and how should you use them?

In the past, having a pocketful of business cards was a must if you were heading out for any event. Today, digital business cards, vCards, and QR codes are some ways to skip the paper.

In-person Introductions

- Digital Business Cards or virtual business cards are a customizable, safe, and convenient way to share contact information in real-time. You can easily create one with a free online graphics service like Canva. Several companies are offering these services with apps, some fees may be included.
- vCards - If you have ever gone into the contact app on your phone and emailed or texted contact information from the "share contact" option, you have shared a vCard file. Also known as a VCF or Virtual Contact File, it is a standardized file like a ".doc" or ".pdf."
- QR codes - Wikipedia describes them as "A type of matrix barcode, the machine-readable optical label can contain information about the item to which it is attached." This technology has been around for nearly 30 years. Between the pandemic and the proliferation of mobile phones, this tool has become more popular than ever. It too can be customized to include any professional information. Consider creating more than one to reflect various areas of your personal and professional life. Once you generate one, you can easily add the image to your phone's photo app or home screen for easy sharing.

Virtual Introductions

People are "meeting" you online 24/7. Therefore, your digital footprint is more important than ever. Updating your digital profiles is an important networking task and should be done with some regularity. Here are a few questions to ask yourself.

- Do my social media profiles reflect an appropriate level of professionalism?
- Are my current job duties reflected accurately? Have I included new projects and community-driven pursuits?
- Does my profile photo accurately reflect what I look like today?

A digital update can be as simple as virtually introducing yourself. Are others sometimes unsure how to pronounce your name correctly, or is your name as easy as John Smith? Regardless, take the opportunity to introduce yourself. LinkedIn allows members to record and display the correct name pronunciation on their profiles. "Hi, my name is Jahn Smyth. Thank you for visiting my profile, and I hope you have a great day! "

Knowing your audience is key to determining your networking style and use of technology. Even if you are using the new digital technology, it won't hurt to have a few business cards in your pocket for those who are not there yet. In addition, you may not have the opportunity to swap digital information with someone but may have time to slide them your card. While you are at it, print a QR code directly to the card to show your versatility. Take advantage of all the ways technology can improve your networking while having a backup plan if needed.

Inspiration by: QR code. (2022, November 15). In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code