



Building your own small business takes a lot of time, energy and effort; creating a network of friends and mentors around you to support your business journey can help to provide extra motivation, professional support and lead to increased business sales.

There are number of benefits to networking and we've included some practical tips on how to connect with your network in a virtual world.

How does networking benefit your small business?

1. Sharing ideas and knowledge

You will get new ideas and points of view that can give you a new perspective on how to do something. Someone may have gone through a similar issue before, and they can share what they did and the changes they made to their business.

2. New opportunities

The more people you're talking to about your business, the more likely a new opportunity to partner and promote what you do.

3. New connections

As well as the people you'll meet directly from any networking you do, you'll also get the benefit of introductions to their networks too. If you and your business make a good impression on someone, they are very likely to introduce you to other people within their network. Don't forget that it's your role to do this in return too!

4. Build your confidence

The more you talk about what your small business does, the more your confidence will grow.

5. Raise your profile

As you get your name and your business's name out within the networking group, this will build your reputation within your local community.

How can you continue to network whilst we're in social isolation?

Go through the contacts in your phone, social media account or email and create a list of people or organisations who you would like to connect with. We are seeing competitors reaching out to see how businesses can work together – sharing ideas, opportunities and resources. Who can help you and your business to get through? Who do you want in your corner coaching and supporting you?

What questions do you need answering, and what questions might you be able to answer?

Ask questions, listen to responses and answer questions. Share challenges, ideas, stories and as appropriate, laughter and tears. We are business owners and we are people, often conversations contain a bit about both. Remember that networking is just as much about the things that you give, as it is about the things that you get.

Think about what questions or support your business needs, this might determine what kind of networking you do, or which group you join.

Top 10 Tips

Connect with your networks



What's the best way to network? It depends!

Phone (don't forget to leave a message!), text, email, Facetime, Messenger, Teams, Zoom....? Not everyone is good at checking messages and some people have limited connection. You may have to try a few ways, a few times and allow time. Sometimes people won't respond.

Find a local business network group, or social media networking group.

Many communities have **business networking groups** that get together to share ideas, training and provide support to each other. Sometimes there's a small attendance or membership fee, but many are free to attend.

Social media business groups are another way to connect with other businesses who might not be in your town or region. These forums are great opportunities to ask questions from your peer network, share ideas and ask for help. Business groups may be general in nature, or specific to your industry and can spark wonderful collaborative opportunities between members.

They are free and fantastic for the small business owner who often works alone.

After connecting with someone, if you or the other person is in emotional distress then refer them to a service that is equipped to help such as Lifeline or Beyond Blue.



Get in touch

Many Rivers clients can contact their local business coach directly or via 1300 626 974.

For new clients, Many Rivers is here to help people start small businesses and grow existing businesses. Visit manyrivers.org.au for more information.

**"Work with all those around you,
unite and bounce off each other"**

Jamie McMillan
Many Rivers business coach, Toowoomba, QLD