

Networking: Can we still do it?



Nicole Alexander, Esq.
Director of Professional and Business Development
McElroy Deutsch

Last December, your calendar was likely packed full of seminars, conventions, holiday lunches with clients, cocktail

parties hosted by your professional organizations, and perhaps even a quick trip to visit family. Your business and personal networking opportunities were endless.

Three months later, in March 2020, you were in lockdown, working from home in your pajamas, looking at a calendar filled with cancellations, and with no clear picture of when your life would ever return to normal. Networking took a back seat to healthcare concerns.

Fast forward to mid-June, and as society begins to re-emerge, we remain in limbo with respect to health risks involved in social gatherings. To restore business momentum, and to maintain individual (and organizational) sanity, networking has returned as a priority, but with unfamiliar limitations.

If you're unsure of how to proceed, here are some suggestions on how to safely re-engage in our new world of networking:

Reach out directly to clients. It's time to go beyond the "Stay Safe" and "We're All In This Together" messaging, and to help current and



former clients to address the challenges and opportunities created by the crisis. If you have specific suggestions for clients, then propose them; even if they don't involve your products or services. Lacking any proposed solutions, simply reach out by phone or email to ask how they're doing. The gesture will be appreciated and long remembered.

Increase your social presence. If you don't have a complete and up-to-date presence on LinkedIn, you need to get to work on it. More importantly, you should take full advantage of this social media platform by increasing your LinkedIn connections, posting relevant content, commenting on other peoples' posts, and congratulating them on their accomplishments.

Share your intellectual capital. If you've never

written a bylined article for a professional or trade publication, now is a great time to get started. The content provides great raw material to post on social media, and to send directly to your contact list. Just be sure to seek an editor's interest in your article before you start writing.

Engage your organization. At McElroy Deutsch, we're focusing on internal training to increase our attorneys' marketing capabilities. We're also offering wellness programs to keep our employees healthy and motivated.

Host fun online activities. Invite clients, prospects and referral sources to a virtual happy hour, hosted by your company, and led by a sommelier. (If budgets allow, send them the wine in advance.) Or for the non-drinkers, host a trivia night,

complete with prizes or trophies.

Maintain your cultural interests. Most cultural organizations are offering innovative ways to connect with them. You can participate in virtual charity galas, attend online musical and theatrical events, and even tour museum exhibits like this one: <https://www.newarkmuseumart.org/tibet-vr> or <https://www.njpac.org/inyourlivingroom/>

Social distancing does not mean we can no longer engage in networking. But to overcome the new realities, we have to be creative, proactive and flexible to benefit from the new virtual opportunities and online platforms that have emerged and taken on greater importance as a result of the pandemic.

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1300 Mount Kemble Ave. | P.O. Box 2075 | Morristown, NJ 07962-2075 | (973) 993-8100

McELROY, DEUTSCH, MULVANEY
CARPENTER LLP

