

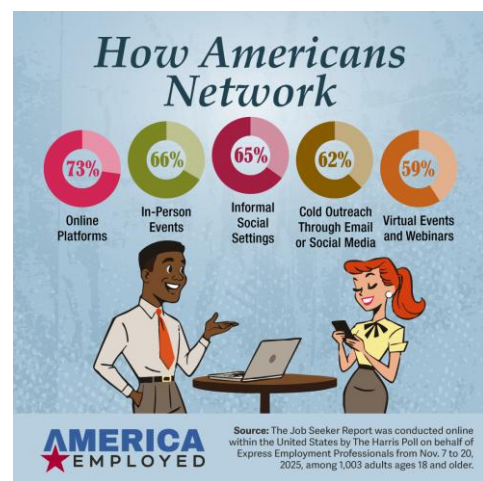


84% of US Job Seekers Say Networking Matters, but 59% Don't Know Where to Begin

New data shows strong results from professional networking even as workers struggle with confidence, clarity and where to start.

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 11, 2026 — New data from an Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey shows U.S. workers overwhelmingly believe networking is essential, yet many feel unprepared, unsure of where to do it and divided on whether digital platforms help — or hinder — the process.

Eighty-four percent of job seekers say networking is important to getting a foot in the door, and hiring managers agree even more strongly, with 92 percent saying candidates should be networking to improve their chances. The findings highlight a national workforce that sees connections as currency yet continues to struggle to navigate the evolving mix of digital and in-person opportunities.



How America Networks Today

Job seekers use a wide range of methods to build relationships in 2026, including:

- Online platforms like LinkedIn or Meetup (73%)
- In-person events ranging from conferences to meetups (66%)
- Informal social settings from coffee chats to dinners (65%)
- Cold outreach through email or social media (62%)
- Virtual events and webinars (59%)

Who Networks and How: Clear Differences Across Age and Gender

Younger job seekers are the most active networkers and the most comfortable mixing digital tools with face-to-face connection, while men generally cast a wider digital net than women.

Men also tend to lean into more networking channels than women.

They are heavier users of online platforms (79% of men vs. 67% of women), attend more in-person events (70% vs. 61%) and are more willing to try cold outreach (70% vs. 54%).

Men also show up to virtual events at higher rates (66% vs. 52%) and are more likely to believe digital networking helps build real relationships, with 51% saying online platforms make authentic connections easier, compared with 38% of women.

Younger workers take an even more expansive approach.

Gen Z and millennials lead nearly every networking method, from online platforms (77% and 76%) to in-person events (74% and 70%). Engagement steadily drops with age. Gen X and boomers trail behind, particularly on virtual and digital channels, where their participation falls as low as 48% and 40%.

Results vs. Reality

Despite clear differences in how people network, the impact is undeniable. Many job seekers who put effort into building connections see real results. Workers say networking has led to:

- 39% receiving a referral
- 36% securing an interview
- 32% receiving a job offer
- 17% earning a promotion

Altogether, 71% report at least one positive outcome tied to the relationships they built.

Even as job seekers recognize networking's value, many feel unsure about how to navigate it. They say:

- 59% do not know the best places or websites to network within their field
- 44% lack the people or soft skills to make networking worth their time
- 51% of Gen Z feel especially underprepared in this area

Hiring managers echo this shift.

They say networking matters more now than it did 10 years ago, with 61% calling it increasingly important for job seekers. Many agree online platforms help people form authentic relationships, yet younger workers continue to push for a balance between digital and in-person opportunities.

"The data shows a workforce caught between intention and uncertainty," said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, President and Chairman of Express Employment International. "People know relationships

can open doors and many already benefit from them, yet too many lack the confidence or clarity to navigate today's fast-changing networking environment. As the way we connect continues to evolve, workers need guidance that helps them turn those connections into real career opportunities."

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Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 3 to 19, 2025, among 1,002 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 7 to 20, 2025, among 1,003 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

About Express Employment Professionals

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