

## WHY YOUNGER ALUMNI PROVIDE THE MOST HELP

*Summary: Learn how to network with all alumni—young and old—from your alma mater.*



**Question:** I have been in the working world for three years and have already found it useful to contact and network with alumni from my alma mater. However, I find it much easier to communicate with those who have graduated recently than people who graduated several years ago. The latter are less receptive; I find this strange. Could my approach be flawed?

**Answer:** You have tapped one of the most valuable, yet often overlooked, resources in the career network. Hailing from the same alma mater is an automatic link and convenient door opener. Accommodating alumni offer a range of resources from basic career tips to job leads and mentoring relationships.

Your favorable experience with more recently graduated alumni isn't unique. According to Karin Ash, director of the Career Management Center at Cornell University's Johnson School of Management, "Alumni who've graduated within the last 10 years seem to take the most interest, and those within five years are the most active in networking." Perhaps it is because these individuals remember clearly their own job searches and how valuable it was when someone helped. Ms. Ash also says recent graduates, generally in junior roles, are more likely than those in executive positions to be connected to entry-level contacts and openings.

It has always been the case that some people are simply more inclined than others to offer assistance and develop relationships. Focus your efforts on more recent grads, but don't completely write off the more senior alumni. Consider adjusting your approach to account for possible generational differences.

While "the old boy network" has been around forever, today's assertive brand of networking can be a turnoff to those who are used to a more gradual and involved form of relationship building that would require getting to know someone well before requesting a favor. At the very least, be sure your approach is duly respectful of age and authority by including these components in any exchange:

- Offer an introduction of yourself.
- Establish your common ground.
- Recognize the accomplishments and wisdom of the alumnus.
- Request an opportunity to seek advice or share information.

See the following articles for more information about networking:

- [33 Quick Tips to Improve Your Networking Experience](#)
- [5 TED Talks to Help You Network](#)
- [Creative Ways to Network](#)