

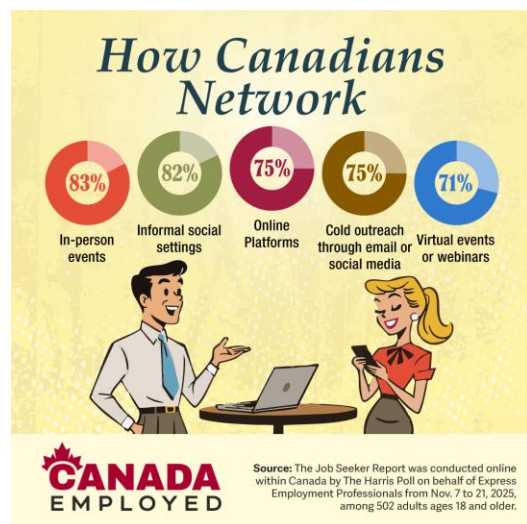


Networking Becoming More Important in Uncertain Job Market, But Job Seekers Struggle in a Digital World

Big differences in networking between generations and genders

TORONTO, March 11, 2026 — New data from an Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey shows both Canadian job seekers and employers overwhelmingly agree networking is essential to more easily obtaining employment. Yet many job seekers feel unprepared, unsure of where to do it or how to do it in an increasingly digital world and are divided on whether digital platforms help or hinder the process.

More than three-quarters of job seekers (82%) say networking is important to getting a foot in the door. Hiring managers agree even more strongly (86%), with a plurality (45%) saying networking is even more important now compared to 10 years ago. 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 Canada Networks Today

Today's job seekers use a wide range of methods to build relationships, including:

- In-person events ranging from conferences to meetups (83%)
- Informal social settings from coffee chats to dinners (82%)
- Online platforms like LinkedIn or Meetup (75%)
- Cold outreach through email or social media (75%)
- Virtual events and webinars (71%)

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 connections.

Gen Z and millennials lead across all networking methods, but especially when it comes to online platforms (83% and 77% compared to 72% for Gen X and 66% for boomers) and virtual events or webinars (79% and 71% compared to 74% for Gen X and 54% for boomers).

There are also significant gender differences, with men networking significantly more than women. For example, men are much more likely to attend in-person networking events (92%) compared to women (72%), use online platforms (83% compared to 65% for women) and attend virtual networking events or webinars (78% compared to 63% for women).

Results vs. Reality

Despite clear differences in how people network, the impact is undeniable. Job seekers who put effort into building connections see real results. Altogether, 60% report at least one positive outcome tied to the relationships they built.

Workers say networking has led to:

- 37% receiving a referral
- 23% securing an interview
- 21% receiving a job offer

Networking struggles

Even though job seekers recognize the value of networking, many struggle with how to navigate it:

- 66% do not know the best places or websites to network within their field.
- 48% lack the people or soft skills to make networking worth their time.

Gen Z feel the most underprepared, with 57% saying they lack the people skills to network effectively and 75% saying they are unsure of the best way to network.

Hiring managers echo this shift. While 2 in 5 hiring decision-makers (38%) feel online networking platforms make it easier to form authentic connections, the majority say networking feels more like a business transaction than a personal connection (70%) and is primarily about exchanging value rather than building relationships (64%).

“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 Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 3 to 19, 2025, among 504 Canadian hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 7 to 21, 2025, among 502 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana Curic at Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

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.

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