

The 4 Most Important People for your Professional Network

1st edition



an ebook from
everydayemstips.com
for students, EMTs,
paramedics, and
EMS managers



Introduction

Networking is an essential component for any EMS professional. Use this ebook as a guide to help you achieve a promotion, find a new job, and grow your brand.

Yes we all have a personal brand. What do you want other EMS professionals and people you admire to think of when they think of you? Will the strength of your brand help you get the jobs and opportunities you desire?

Finally, please share your networking tips. Email them to greg.friese@everydayemstips.com. Good ideas are worth sharing.

To your success,

Greg Friese, MS, NREMT-P



How to Use this Guide

You are responsible for your success. To be most successful with this ebook:

1. Read the ebook
2. Interact regularly with your network
3. Review your current brand, especially online
4. Plan actions to improve and grow your brand





4 Important People



Networking is essential to advancing your career as an EMS professional. Make sure you are **building relationships** with these four important people.

1. EMT Instructor
2. Chief/Service Director
3. Medical Director
4. It depends ...



#1: EMT Instructor

Your EMT class instructor is probably your most important initial professional networking connection because they will help you launch your career. Your EMT class instructor sees you go from “**zero to hero**” over the course of just a few months.

Now I am not implying you be a “*teacher’s pet, suck-up, or fanny kisser,*” but **make sure your instructor knows** that you:

- Want to **succeed** and **improve**
- Work hard to **achieve** your goals
- Communicate **effectively** with others



#1: EMT Instructor

Your EMT class instructor can:

- Write letters of recommendation for jobs, scholarships, or education
- Provide phone references during employment screening
- Tell you about job, training, and scholarship opportunities
- Introduce you to other EMS professionals to expand your professional network





EMT Instructor How To

Follow these tips to network with your EMT instructor and build a lasting relationship:

1. Complete assignments **well and on time**.
2. Be **action oriented** towards learning opportunities.
3. Write a **hand-written thank you note** to each of your instructors after class completion.
4. **Specifically ask** for your instructor to highlight character traits in any recommendation letters and phone references.
5. Connect with your instructor – **after graduation** – at social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, or EMSConnect.
6. Talk with your instructor at conferences and training programs to **keep them up-to-date** on your EMS career.



#2: Chief/Service Director

The difficulty of connecting with your chief or service director (*the boss*) will somewhat depend on the size of your service. If you work for a large service you may see your director occasionally. Use these opportunities to ask what is happening around the company. When asked about operations give your honest opinion, but **share solutions to problems**.

Volunteering for committees to evaluate new equipment, write policies and protocols, or develop training programs is a great way to connect with managers. In a committee meeting, your chief/service director can observe your **critical thinking, small group communication, and problem solving skills**.



Chief/Service Director How To

Follow these tips to network with your chief/service director and build a lasting relationship:

1. Talk about what is going well for you, the people you are working with, and general operations of the service.
2. Discuss problems when asked about problems.
3. Join and contribute to a workplace committee.
4. Seek out things you have in common with your chief/service director like hobbies, professional affiliations, and friends.
5. Use common interests as an opening to chat.
6. Thank your chief/service director for changes and improvements that help you do your job better. Be specific.



TOP TIP: Save Time and Money

When presenting a solution to your service director put it in the context of saving time, money, or both. Paramedic and entrepreneur

Jim Hoffman says, “Try and recommend money and or time saving ideas. This shows you are **thinking about the overall company benefit** and not just how you are affected in the field.”

Top Networking Tip



TOP TIP: No Whining!

Once you have a reputation as a whiner/complainer it **is a difficult label to shed.**

Talk about problems when asked, but always frame a discussion of problems with realistic and actionable solutions. Always offer to contribute solutions.



Top Networking Tip



#4: Medical Director

Every EMS service has a medical director. Certainly their involvement is variable, but in my experience most medical directors want to be active and connect with field personnel.

When you see your medical director at the hospital, in the field, or at a training meeting introduce yourself by telling them your name and a bit about yourself. For example, “I am John, I was hired 6 months ago, and I usually work out of station 3.”

Be friendly, but not disruptive when you see your medical director at the hospital. The key to building this relationship is **excellent patient assessment and using the protocols** the medical director has authorized you to use.



Medical Director How To

Follow these tips to network with your medical director and build a lasting relationship:

1. When giving a report **don't blame others** (e.g. 1st responders, nursing home staff, service director) for gaps in your assessment or application of treatments.
2. Ask **questions** during medical director led training sessions.
3. When handing off a patient at the hospital don't be shy about **asking for feedback**. Ask, "Hey doc, what did we do well? What could we have done differently?"
4. Use common **interests** as an opening to chat.
5. Thank your medical director for **changes and improvements** that help you do your job better. Be specific.



TOP TIP: Participate

Most of the medical directors I know teach using a variation of the Socratic method – presenting information by asking the audience probing questions and debating the best course of action.

You will **quickly build rapport** with your instructor by answering questions during training sessions. If you are unsure about an answer qualify your answer by saying, *“I am not totally sure, but I think ... or this is what comes to mind immediately ...”*

Top Networking Tip



TOP TIP: Complex Calls



Not all calls easily fit into standard assessment and treatment protocols. After a complex call **ask your medical director for their opinion** and suitability of your actions. Be prepared to admit there might have been a better answer than your actions and/or multiple solutions to the problem.

Top Networking Tip



#4: It depends ...

Every region or city where EMS is provided is different. The best networking connection in your area may not be one of the top three already discussed. Find out who is tops in your area.

An aspiring paramedic told me that the best networking connection in his city is current paramedics. If a current paramedic sees potential in a student he will go out of his way to help the student develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities to succeed as a paramedic.

**Who are the best networking connections
in your city or area?**



Using Your Connections





Use Networking Connections

Having a network of professional connections is for more than just getting a new job. A network may alert you to ***new training, work, and other professional development opportunities.***

Some of the ways to use your network:

1. List as a **reference** on a conference presentation proposal.
2. Write a letter of **recommendation** for a training scholarship.
3. Proof an article you have written before **publication** in a professional magazine.
4. **Critique** a training presentation before you deliver it.
5. **Recommend** reference materials for a presentation or article you are preparing.



TOP TIP: Be Specific

When asking a member of your network for assistance **be specific** in how they can help you best. In your personal request to them for assistance say things like:

1. I would like these things highlighted in the reference letter ...
2. When asked about my positive contributions to our organization tell them about the time I ...
3. This one thing is important for me to get this opportunity ...

Top Networking Tip



7 Bonus Networking Tips





#1 Bonus Tip: Give Back

Make professional networking connections valuable to the other person by giving back.

1. **Thank** them for assisting your efforts.
2. **Follow-up** after any time they wrote a reference letter or gave a phone recommendation. Did you get the opportunity? Why or why not? What are you doing next?
3. **Share** information with them they might find interesting. Tag a magazine article and write a note “Thought you might find this interesting” or send a website link to useful and interesting information (*but don’t forward email jokes or “forward this email to everyone you know.” These actions diminish your value in the networking relationship.*)



#2 Bonus Tip: Personalize

When you contact people in your network make sure to personalize your communication. Use a personal greeting and make a specific connection to the recipient. According to paramedic and entrepreneur Jim Hoffman, “this can make the contact more likely to **make time for your communication.**”

A personal connection also helps remind the contact of how they know you.



#3 Bonus Tip: Stay Relevant

If you participate (*and you should*) in social networks like Twitter, Facebook, or EMSConnect **stay relevant** to your professional goals and the interests of your friends.

Connect with other EMS professionals on Twitter (you can follow me [@gfriese](#) and I will help you connect with other EMS professionals on Twitter). **Share** links to news stories, how-to articles, podcasts, and videos that are **relevant and useful** to EMS professionals.

Follow, share, and comment on links shared by friends. The sharing and commenting leads to connections, project opportunities, and job leads.



#4 Bonus Tip: Be Genuine

Be genuine and upfront about your goals with professional networking contacts. Paramedic and film maker Thaddeus Setla told me, “**Be genuine** about your goals to everyone. People can see through you even when you aren’t expecting it.”

What does this mean? When asking a connection for help tell them why you are asking. Is it because you want a new job, need a few more CE credits, you are considering a career change, want to increase your pay rate, or something different?

Being clear about your goals and ambitions will help your network guide opportunities to you now and in the future.



#5 Bonus Tip: Attend Events

Attend events – conferences, expos, trade shows – in your region or state at least once per year. Attend a national conference every few years and more often if you can. During the events talk to other EMS Professionals that are:

1. Mutual aid partners
2. Work at similar agencies
3. Work in totally different EMS systems

Learn about **what works well** in other systems. How have other services solved the problems your service is struggling to solve? **Focus on discussing solutions** and not on complaining about problems, managers, or co-workers.



#6 Bonus Tip: Event Follow-up

Jamie Davis, RN, NREMT-P explains the importance of follow-up: “It is the single most important thing I’ve found to cement new relationships. Use email, phone calls, or arrange a follow-up meeting to show that new contact that you are a **person with initiative and follow through.**”

1. Use a hand-written note for **high value contacts**, such as potential employers, presenters, or well-known EMS authors.
2. Send a note or an email to other contacts that summarizes your meeting, your shared interest, and sincerity for connecting.
3. Before making a social networking friend request to new connections make sure you have a Facebook, LinkedIn, or EMSConnect page that is **professional and relevant.**



#7 Bonus Tip: Mutual Aid

Have you attended a training or after action debrief with mutual aid partners? These can be great networking opportunities. **Mingle and interact** with responders from other departments. Learn their names and roles. Ask what makes their department a good place, what it does well, how they train, and how they typically respond. Simply **showing interest**, by asking questions and listening, will help build relationships.

Investing a few minutes with colleagues from mutual aid partners could help you meet your professional goals, but more importantly it could help save your life.

We pay more attention to the health and safety of the people we know and care about.



Got a Tip?

Share your professional networking tip.
Email your tip and short explanation to
greg.friese@everydayemstips.com for
inclusion in the next edition.



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Testimonials

“I love the content. It is today. It is real and it will come in useful to newcomers to the field.” Thaddeus Setla, NREMT-P, Professional Filmmaker

“It was excellent. I very much enjoyed it, particularly because it made me aware of a few areas that I am lacking in and need to correct.” April Saling, EMT-B, <http://www.pinkwarmdry.com>

“Overall, I thought the document was very well written and composed. I feel that you covered the topic well. Even a six year veteran picked up two specific tips from it.” Josh Creamer, Lieutenant

“I like this ebook. It is very concise and written in a no-nonsense approach that I think will easily resonate with EMS providers as genuine.” Bill Kimball, EMT-P