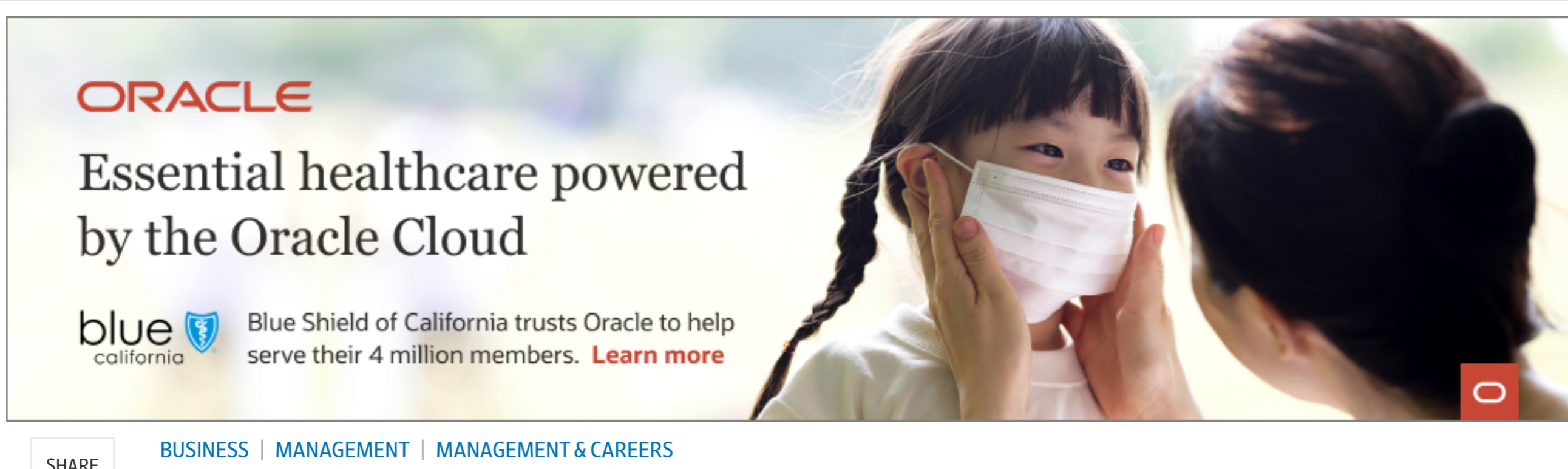


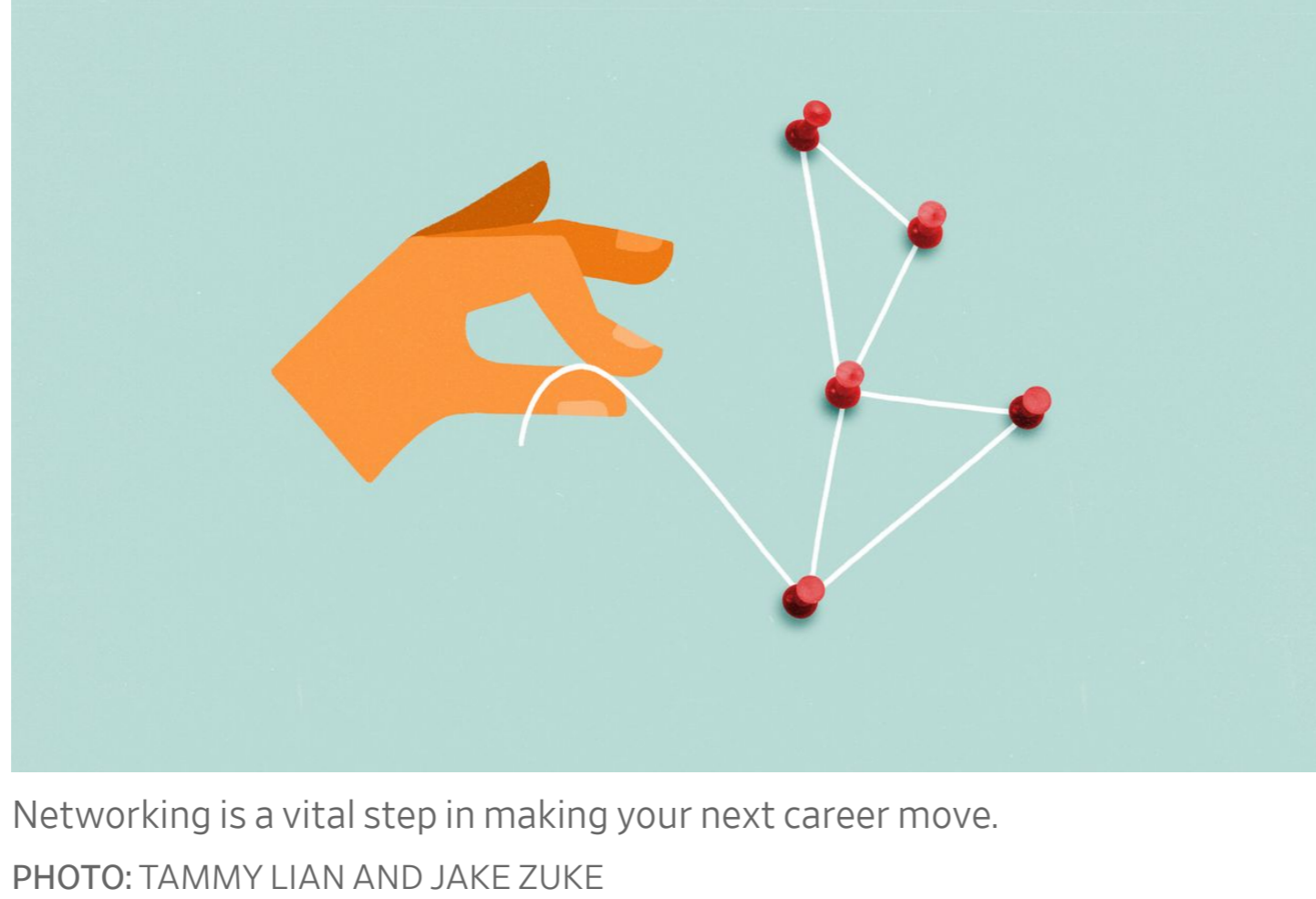
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How to Network and Meet the Right People



Networking is a vital step in making your next career move. PHOTO: TAMMY LIAN AND JAKE ZUKE

By Alex Janin

Nov. 11, 2020 10:28 am ET

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In brief

- Don't be afraid to send that email. Don't make it all about you. Think about what you can offer. Keep your meetings brief.

Building a network is vital for your career, whether you are looking to take the next step, change industries or build your personal brand. Networking can feel intimidating at any age or stage of life, but overcoming jitters can lead to productive and lasting professional relationships.

1. Take a leap of faith and reach out when it is uncomfortable.

If you have had your eye on an industry leader's LinkedIn page, now is the time to hit the "Message" button. It can feel daunting to ask for a meeting with somebody you have never met, but overcoming the fear of rejection can lead to a meaningful connection.

The strategy helped Ms. Benken establish a relationship with a successful woman she admired who was speaking at a business lunch. "I walked right up to her and I said, 'Hey, I would love to have coffee with you. You're a phenomenal woman. I want to get to know you.'" It worked, and the woman eventually became Ms. Benken's mentor.

Before you send that message:

- Identify your goal. Are you looking for a new job? Hoping to meet someone at a particular company? Looking to learn more about a certain industry? Know what you want to get out of a networking meeting before asking for one. Select the right people to approach. Ask friends, colleagues or mentors if they can help recommend or connect you with somebody. Choose your platform. Beyond traditional methods of contacting people, such as email, phone calls or professional networking websites like LinkedIn, there are other ways to reach out. Plan what you want to say.

2. Be prepared to give more than you take.

Once you have landed the meeting, whether it is in person or over a video call, think about how it will be structured. Do your research and prepare two or three specific questions. Networking meetings should be as much about learning from the other person as they are about pitching yourself.

The do's and don'ts of networking:



- Don't simply hand your business card—physically or virtually—to somebody. Explain specifically why you want to connect with them. Don't start by asking what the other person can do for you. Don't directly ask for a job. Do ask the person you are meeting how you can help them.

A networking meeting should be reciprocal. Think about and communicate what you can offer. If you are less experienced than the person you are meeting, you might be able to share a fresh perspective they otherwise wouldn't hear.

Ms. Benken, who is 38 years old, has a 75-year-old mentor. "She has been there, done everything and that's why I was attracted, right? I thought, wow, there's a lot I can learn," says Ms. Benken of her mentor. "But going back the other way," Ms. Benken says her mentor thought: "Wow, I really love the energy of this woman and she can teach me new hacks and new tricks and new technology!"

"A cup of coffee with the right person can change your entire trajectory."

— Sarah Benken, The KNOW Women

3. Keep your meetings short and sweet.

Bear in mind that a lot of people are suffering from Zoom fatigue. Do the work of proposing a specific time and sending a calendar invite and keep the meeting to no more than 30 minutes.

Prepare a concise and focused personal narrative to kick off the conversation.

Don't worry about covering everything in the first meeting. If it goes well, you could have a longstanding relationship and there will be future opportunities to cover more ground.

4. Finish strong.

When you feel like you are getting to the end of the meeting, feel free to ask the other person to introduce you to one or two of their contacts who might have some useful insights.

Don't forget to send a follow-up email, text or direct message thanking them for their time.

Bonus tips

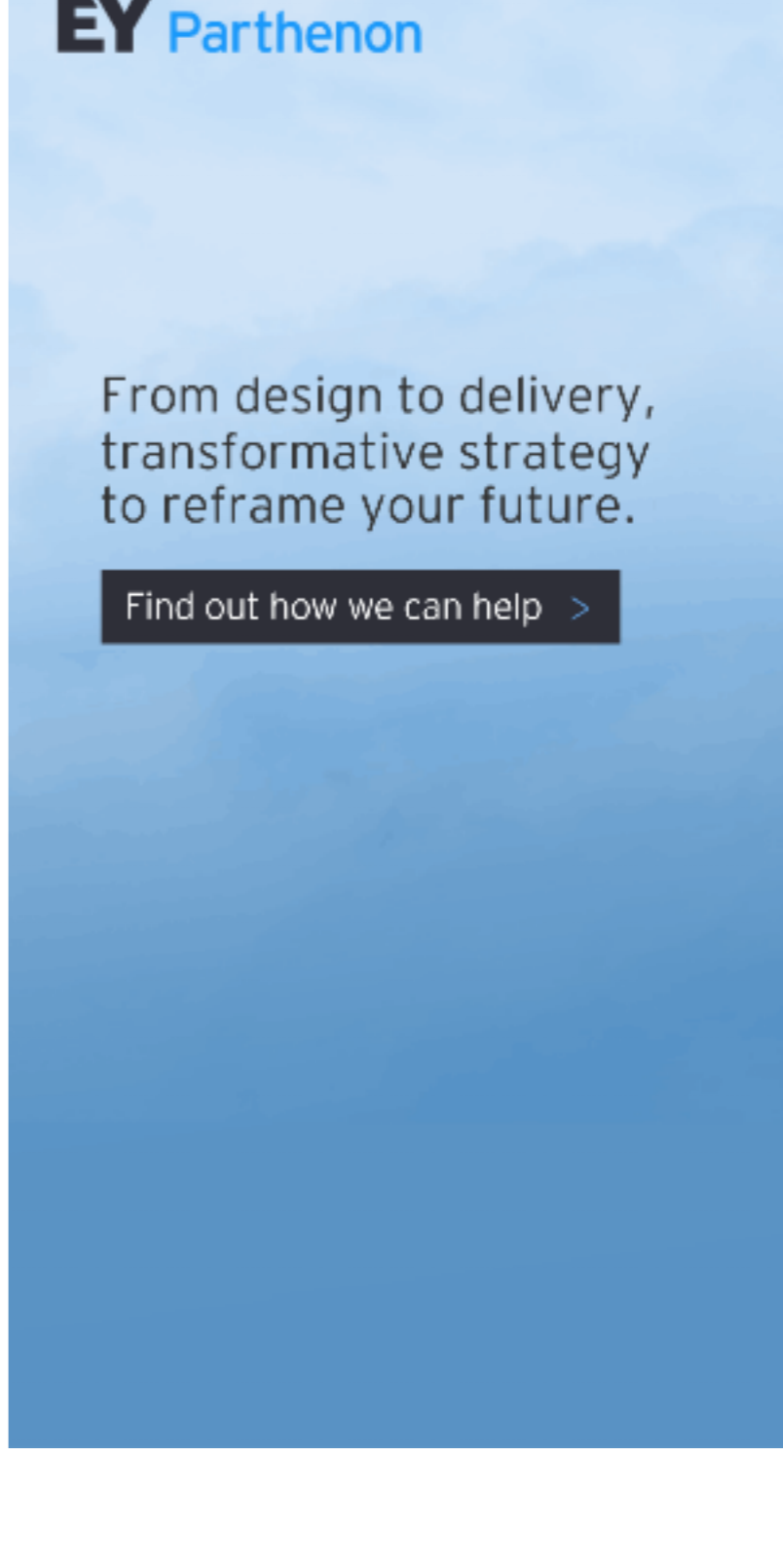
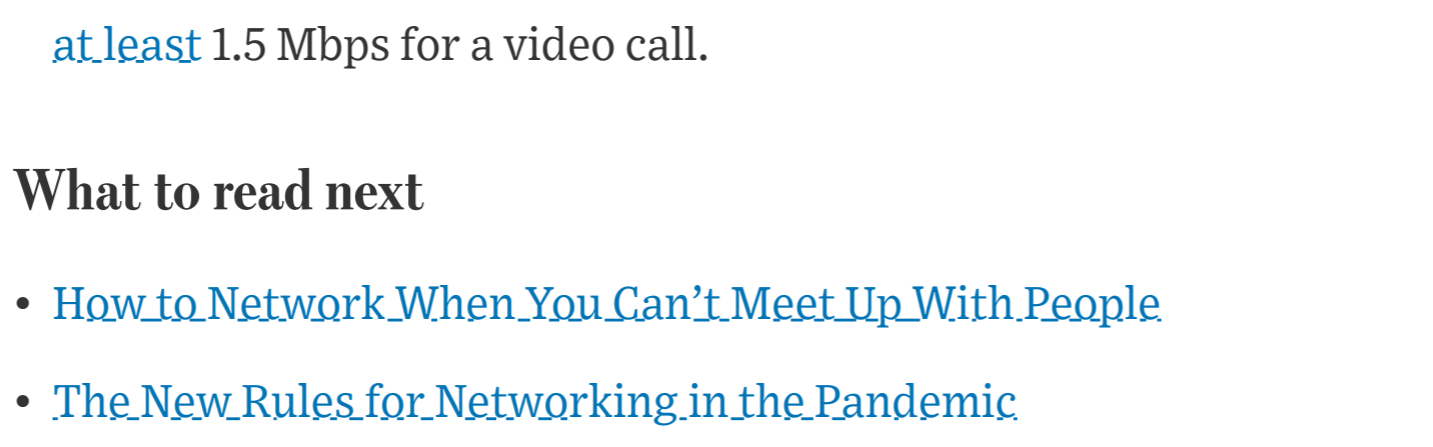
- Get comfortable with your technology. Be friendly and be yourself.

Resources

- LinkedIn. Zoom extension. Speedtest.

What to read next

- How to Network When You Can't Meet Up With People. The New Rules for Networking in the Pandemic.



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