Hello, welcome to connect to pods, Commercial Services Group recruitment podcast for job seekers and employees alike. Welcome to the first episode of our connecting to people series. Today we're joined by Steven Hoban, the service director of commercial services group recruitment division. Steven, would you like to introduce yourself a little bit?

Hello all my name is Steven Holborn. I'm services director for commercial services group where operationally oversee our managed service and joint venture initiatives and our externally facing trading brands.

We thought it'd be great to have an interview that followed the timeline of someone who's just looking for a job all the way to getting an interview for a job they've been hoping for the first step of anyone's journey would begin with networking. So Steven, without further ado, a simple question with the not so simple answer. Why should you network?

Yes, it's a really good point, Joe, I think it is an area that a lot of people don't take as seriously as they should, in terms of their ongoing career progression. I think it's widely recognised that people who network efficiently and very much proactively engage with their network do tend to progress better through their careers, I think it was statistically broken down by by a business professional, as widely kind of used in seminars, etc, that are about 10% of, of your progression is down to being competent and good at what you do about 30% is down to your professional brand, and how you're perceived by others. And the remaining 60 is down to networking and your ability to do so effectively. So I think it plays a very important role in in your overall career in the life cycle of your career. But actually, I think there's many other reasons why being involved in networking activities is important. I think if you work in a very specialist skill area, it can allow you access to similar similarly minded individuals where you can share best practice or latest intelligence in the market. And that can help you indirectly widen your skill set. And obviously, the obvious one is, you know, it widens the number of opportunities available to you if your network is extensive and actively engaged. So yeah, I think it is important, I think, also, it's important to recognise that it is a skill. Different people, I think network to different levels, naturally. But to really maximise the effectiveness of network network, it does take time, it takes investment to not only make those appropriate connections in the first place, but to build those relationships and have an effective network. So it is a skill that you should treat as part of your job search. But overall, your overall career planning is to invest the time and learn the skills to truly your network effectively.

Brilliant, thank you. I mean, 60% That's a pretty significant stat to ignore. For many of our listeners that may be panicking, hearing that, can you settle their nerves and say, when does networking truly begin? Are they too late?

Yeah, oddly enough. I've only recently been exposed to that stat myself. So I can I can empathise with everybody thinking Hold on, I've missed a huge chunk of of, you know, how I could have been progressed in my career. So I understand that I think the important thing is to recognise that there's, you know, you haven't missed the boat, you can be right at the beginning of your career, you could be partway through or, you know, as as I may be kind of in a mature career position. But there's still many benefits to networking. So even if it's something that you think like, well, I didn't recognise that it is something I need to work on. It's not too late. I think when does it begin? Well actually begins it with with every interaction you make really well, maybe not every interaction, but certainly every business interaction. So it's kind of with every colleague that you come across every customer you deal with every potential client that you may be able to spot until or develop a long term relationship with, and even some prospective individuals that, you know, aren't in your network yet. But you can see through what they do on a daily basis, perhaps a role that's very similar to yours, or they are recognised experts in a particular area or influences or whatever you would call it. So I think from the minute you understand this To the important role, then that's the perfect time to start. It's not too disastrous to suddenly think, well, I've never really been involved in this or, you know, now I'm gonna have to replicate the last 20 years and make up for it. But it is, it is an amazing statistic, and did take me by surprise. But I think once you know that, you can look around probably, in your own experience and see individuals that have progressed. and think, Well, I didn't really understand why they have maybe got that job that I could have went for, but we do whether it's a British thing, I don't know. But certainly, there's a little bit of a hiding behind our own bushel. So we kind of believe that if we just go about doing our job diligently and do a very good job, and career opportunities will come our way. And for some people that that does happen. And for some really progressive organisations, they have things in place that recognise talent coming through their organisations, and are very proactive in managing that. But actually, some places aren't and sometimes, you know, companies that perhaps aren't as progressive can not deliberately hold people in certain positions. But are they genuinely looking to progress, someone who's highly competent in their area, particularly if they've got a skill set that is, you know, going to be difficult to replace. So I think you do have to take ownership of your own career, even if it's right at the very start of us. That's not to say you have to have every stage mapped out. But you know, to know that you want to progress and to build that network around, and network that might help create or support those opportunities, whether directly, as in, yes, this person is the hiring manager for a company I want to work for further down the line, or just this person is clearly an expert, well renowned in their fields. So you know, being connected to them and sharing content that they then like, for example, on social media, that adds a kind of credibility to yourself. So I think it's never too late. But it's a case of, you know, recognise it as part of the puzzle and trying to find the strategies to give it the time it deserves think.

Amazing. Thank you. So based on that answer, it sounds like there isn't really a good or a bad time or place to make a business connection, whenever you find someone in the relevant sector, or even just a similar position that you're after make the connection and grow your network. But for those of us that may feel like they're falling behind and want to speed up a little bit with their networking. Are there any places they can go to start creating their own network as quickly as possible?

Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, there are certainly well, particularly now more than ever, with things such as, you know, the rise of things like webinars, in perhaps maybe 10 years ago, if I look at my career would, would have to be around attending, you know, large, large conferences or seminars on a trip to London on a day out to try and maximise. It's very difficult for people to deal with that particularly in in less senior roles, because you can't really say to your hiring manager, I want to go to London, because, you know, potentially when I'm at work with all these people, but the access to various groups, seminar, seminars, webinars, etc. And our virtual and online, really is widened that and the amount of, I suppose content for want of better word that's available, you know, whether it be on YouTube, Ted Talks, individuals who posts I'm not saying you necessarily link with everybody that looks great on YouTube, we're kind of saying is the amount of content or the connect the potential touch points of finding out who these people are is much wider than it was? But yes, you know, on a more basic level, it might be as simple as finding small groups of like minded individual business owners in a local area, with a view to networking to drive greater sales generation opportunities, on a lot on a larger corporate level, it might be you're looking at individuals who have same, the same rules as you do in different organisations. And likewise through if you look at LinkedIn, for example, there's a huge number of groups that you can follow. There's organisations you can follow, and there's trade magazines that you can follow, and the ability to share articles yourself that you may have read either in a book or you may have picked up from the news on the press. If you think it's relevant to your network, then sharing things and being proactive in that network is now in many ways easier than ever. It still takes the work but the the touch points that are open to you are significantly more through With the rise of, of social media and and perhaps they were 10, 20 years ago when it would be, you know, perhaps a bit more of a face to face old school style way of networking.

Excellent. Thank you. So would you say that there are any important factors to consider when trying to create these business connections?

I think there is, I think that needs to be sort of... So first of all, there needs to be a kind of reason for the connection, you know, just suddenly deciding that you don't understand your network is very large. So if I, if I just take LinkedIn or Facebook as an example, to suddenly rush out and try and connect with everybody doesn't necessarily mean you will, you will have a good network, I think the important thing is to focus on having a good network, not a large network, I think it's also important to be open and honest with people that you are engaging with. So and also to do so on a reciprocal on mutual benefit arrangement. So you may not, for example, want to reach out to, you know, the Chief Exec of Google and say, you know, I'd love to connect with you, because at some point, I want to get a job with your organisation. That might actually work, I don't know. But, you know, it's more likely, for example, that you may reach out to, say, your procurement manager, you may reach out to various other procurement managers across your sector, whether that be something very specific, like FMCG, or recruitment, or public sector and say, you know, I'm really keen to connect with like minded individuals that work in the same space for the sharing of collecting and sharing of ideas and collaborating in the future. And, you know, when someone then comes back and makes that connection with you, it's perhaps then about, you know, taking that next stage, can we find five or 10 minutes to catch up to see the where, where our interest is, interests might be congruent, and when there's space for us. And part of that is, I think this is my personal approach. But part of that is about understanding how you may be able to help them because there's a lot of relationships and a lot of stuff on LinkedIn, for example, that I'm sure we all get, which is, you know, I'd like to connect because I want to sell you something. Now, that's, that's the sales generation call us kind of replacement from from a cold call. Whereas if you're trying to create a relationship where it's, can I have some time to find out what sort of thing might be interest of interest to you should I come across it, then that's built a built relationship based on reciprocity, which is often more effective in terms of creating a long term, a long term relationship, because if you can do something for somebody else, then human nature calibrated at some point, I'd be more inclined to want to do something for you. And that's something might be, make another connection that might be even more relevant for you it might be giving some sort of credibility to content you share. It might be, might be as little as making you aware of an opportunity that's coming up in their organisation. But I think it's kind of important, I suppose the point I'm making is, you want to build a network that's around much more than just who can I you know, who can I reach out to the next time I'm looking for a job. It's much more multifaceted than that. If it were if you truly want to be a really strong, strong and open network.

Great. So if you build networks, you should find openings where there wouldn't have been any otherwise. A network contributes a significant amount of finding your dream job. So make sure you get started. Next week, we'll be discussing CVs with Steven and how to construct one from the ground up. See you then. And make sure to tune in at the end of the month to hear the full unedited interview.