

Networking Is Not Just for Job Seekers

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What Is Networking?

- Development and maintenance of mutually valuable relationships.
- Don't confuse the activities of networking with the reality of networking.
- Merriam Webster defines a network as "a usually informally interconnected group or association of persons."
- These associations can be personal relationships or business relationships that you develop with vendors, customers, supervisors, subordinates, and even competitors.
- Talking to strangers!

When Do We Network?

- Constantly – before you need it.
- Read the book *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*, by Harvey McKay.

Where Do We Network?

- Everywhere! If you are only doing it when there is a sign outside the door declaring a networking meeting, you are missing a lot of opportunities.
- Look for groups that are aligned with your goals.

Online Networking

- Participate in online forums relevant to your field of work.
- Observe BEFORE posting – especially read the FAQ section.
- Don't post a resume or announce that you are a job seeker unless the group is designed for that.
- Many professionals use these venues for networking, discussing recent developments in their occupation or industry, and asking questions of each other. Anyone involved in a job search or career exploration can benefit from following these online public discussions, learning about current trends and developments in their field, and finding out about the interests and concerns of those involved.
- Great places to start: Vault.com Career Discussions, AOL People Connection, and LinkedIn.

In-Person Networking

- Networking events, interest groups, neighborhood groups, and volunteer organizations.
- Someplace where you can invest for the future.

With Whom Do We Network?

- Everyone you come into contact with. Your network is limited only by the company you keep.
- The key is to have a valid connection to the person. If you do not have a valid connection but can identify a mutual friend or connection, ask that person to introduce you.
- Expect it to be a two-way street.

How Do We Network?

- Be your authentic self so that you can build trust and create a long-term relationship.
- Be a volunteer – before, during, and after your job search.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Be a good resource for others,
- Be really clear about what you do, who you do it for, why and how you do it, and what makes you special.
- Make your elevator talk captivating and concise, and tell it as often as possible.
- Do you have a special talent? Could you do a speech at a club or event and include in the introduction that you are looking for work? Business groups often look for different speakers.
- Always have business cards with you.
- Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count!
- Contact people directly, not through a list.
- Be concise, accurate, and extremely polite.
- Do not send your resume until asked; let a person tell you how they would like to follow up.
- Follow-up on EVERY contact you make. It is an opportunity to reinforce what you have in common.

Be Approachable – Make Others Comfortable Talking to You

- Be ready to engage and look for a common point of interest.
 - “What’s your favorite...?” “Tell me the best...?” “When was the last time...?”
- Effective openers: “I am not sure we’ve met before,” “What are you working on this week?” and “I’m Bettie and we met at the staff meeting last month.”
- Provide engaging answers – avoid just saying “Fine.”
- Watch your body language.
 - No crossed arms, no limp shoulders; stand, don’t sit; smile and look alert.
 - When you run out of steam, prepare to exit.
- Be a multi-media communicator: email, texting, LinkedIn, phone, fax, website, etc.
 - In every email, include all of your communication contacts: name, title, company (if applicable) mailing address, phone, email, website, your brief self-description.
- Be fearless – be the one to initiate conversations.
- Wear your name tag!
- Are you shy? Volunteer to work at the registration table!

What Are the Rules?

- Be willing to help others – mutually beneficial relationship, so take time to build rapport.
- Show genuine interest, and follow up promptly.
- Make everything professional:
 - Social media, your email address, your business cards

How Do I Manage Relationships?

- Set time limits and contact limits. Share information.

Where Are the Boundaries?

- If you have been helped, then you should help.
- You are a friend, not a therapist. Keep it professional.

What Should I Have in My Toolkit?

- Elevator talk: 60 seconds, 40 words. Your name, your field, and your background or special accomplishment.
- MEMORIZE a brief, well-written summary of accomplishments including education and work. Keep it at hand in case an encounter becomes a contact.
- A brief list of your assets (memorize this).
- Business cards – perhaps more than one version.
- A pen and notepad – make notes right away to help you remember.
- A log of contacts you’ve made and the communications you’ve sent.
- Membership: professional organizations, social groups, community groups, alumni associations, interest groups.