

25 Networking

WHO YOU KNOW

It is often stated that it's not WHAT you know, but WHO you know that gets you the job. It is true that getting to know prominent people in your field is still the best method of conducting a professional and effective job search. Simply stated, networking is the process of getting people you know to introduce you to people you don't know. It means utilizing contacts (friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, colleagues, relatives, and associates) to learn about possible job openings. It is the active cooperation between two people engaged in the same field of interest. Networks are people meeting each other, establishing rapport, talking to each other, sharing ideas, and exchanging information. Networking is learning about hidden job opportunities by actively seeking out information from your contacts, and, in the process, generating additional leads. Networking can take place at a professional conference, a career fair, or in your community.

GETTING STARTED

Job seekers often say that they don't know anyone or that they are unsure how to begin the process of networking. If that seems to be the case for you, consider the obvious starting point. Begin networking through your POFs (Parents Of your Friends) and your FOPs (Friends of your Parents). Begin on familiar ground and see what happens. One thing usually leads to another.

CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

Hot Circle... people you speak to and interact with on a regular basis. They include family, close friends, and individuals you are comfortable dealing with.

Warm Circle... people you may have worked with in the past, acquaintances, and friends of friends.

Cold Circle... people you do not know personally. They include people you have heard of or admire, but are intimidated to talk to.

MAKING CONTACT

"Schmoozing, sucking up, being fake, political or cheesy. These images often come to mind when students are asked what they think of networking. Many picture a used-car salesman in a polyester suit, a flesh-pressing, baby-kissing politician or the superficial rush chairman in *Animal House* (Hi! I'm Eric Stratton! Damn glad to meet you!). Sure, there are people like that, but they're the exception. When done properly, networking isn't sleazy at all. It's simply building relationships. Think of networking as a referral or recommendation. Meeting someone through a mutual contact or referral is like having a seal of approval. These *pre-approved* contacts are what the professional world revolves around. Almost 80% of all positions are found through some type of networking, personal relationships or connection. Like it or not, networking is an integral part of how business really operates . . . Contacts and relationships can be hard to establish and even harder to maintain. The best networkers realize that it's a two-way street. The telltale sign of a sleazy networker is calling only when you want something. Successful networkers aren't sleazy, selfish or opportunistic. They're sincere . . . When it comes to networking, what goes around comes around."

-BRADLEY RICHARDSON / *JobSmarts For TwentySomethings*

"Take on the role of an investigator trying to track down companies that may need your services. Be aggressive. Don't ask whether a company is hiring. Ask about business indicators of change. Get that information and you will find job openings."

-JOHN LA FEVRE / *How You Really Get Hired*

WHAT TO SAY

Seek information, referrals and advice. Seek an interview. Express an interest in the person and his or her organization, but do not ask for a job yet. You might ask: How did you get into this line of work? What do you like best (or least) about your work? Do you have any ideas how a person with my background and skills might find a job in this field? What trends do you see in this career field? How could I take advantage of them? What projects have you been working on that excite you?