



UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO Career Development Center

NETWORKING

WHO YOU KNOW

You've no doubt often heard it said 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 the people you know to introduce you to the people you don't know. It means utilizing contacts (friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, colleagues, relatives, and associates) to gain insider information and learn about opportunities and possible job openings. It is the active cooperation between two people engaged in the same field of interest. It is the intentional process of getting to know people and building relationships.

Networks are people meeting each other, establishing rapport, talking to each other, sharing ideas, and exchanging information. Networking is learning about hidden 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. It might take place in a formal business setting or in a casual social setting. It can even initially take place through on-line networking sites.



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, current co-workers, acquaintances, and friends of friends.

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

GETTING STARTED

Some job seekers 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.



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*

SERIOUS CREDIBILITY

According to industry insiders, people who know people in their field have more credibility. It is assumed that people who have made it their business to get out into the field and meet other people are more ambitious, more assertive, and more excited about their profession. They are regarded as having a greater passion for their careers, they are seen as being more dedicated, and they are considered by employers as possessing a higher level of initiative.

The best candidates in any field are those individuals who make it a point to gather information beyond the textbook and gain experience outside the classroom. As a result, meeting people in one's field happens rather naturally, as an extension of the individual's desire to learn more about his or her chosen profession. Therefore, people who have established relationships with people in their field are more serious about their careers, are truly better candidates, and find better opportunities.

“To be successful, you have to be able to relate to people; they have to be satisfied with your personality to be able to do business with you and to build a relationship with mutual trust.”

-George Ross

WHAT TO SAY

Seek out information, referrals and advice. Seek out opportunities to meet key people in your field. Seek out opportunities engage in meaningful discussions. But, do not hit people up for jobs. Express an interest in the person and his or her organization, but do not ask for a job yet.

You might ask: What skills and qualifications are critical in your field? What trends do you see in your field? Do you have any ideas how a person with my background and skills might go about exploring options in your field?

Networking provides you some of the most valuable learning opportunities. The insiders you talk with can provide you organizational details, industry data, and contact information that might be otherwise difficult to obtain.

WHERE TO GO

Networking can take place just about anywhere. Networking opportunities are more likely in settings where you are able to interact comfortably with people who share common interests and values.

Become an active member of your professional association. Become active in civic organizations. Get involved in fraternal, religious, or social clubs. Get involved in volunteer community service work. Join a local athletic or health club. Attend career fairs, meetings, conventions, or conferences. Attend cultural, theatrical, musical, or sporting events.

THE RULE OF FOUR "R"s

Your hot and warm contacts can be very helpful. However, a candidate is warned never to treat his or her contact as a "courier." Nor should they be expected to get you a job. No contact should ever be expected to do the footwork on behalf of any candidate. The candidate conducts all the footwork while the contact provides the assistance that only an insider is able to offer. Consider the Rule of the Four "R"s regarding your insider contacts...

Resource - Your contact can serve as a resource to you. Your contact can be a good source of insider information and provide you with names, addresses, and other helpful facts and data.

Referral - Your contact can serve as a referral. Perhaps you can use your contact's name in your letter of introduction or in your introductory phone call.

Recommendation - Your contact can serve as a recommendation. Your contact may be willing to "put in a good word for you." He or she might simply offer some positive or favorable comments in your behalf to the appropriate individuals.

Reference - Your contact can serve as a reference. If he or she has been in a position to have observed the quality of your work, your contact may be willing to be listed on your reference list. Your contact could then be called to provide further insight in your behalf.



PROSPECTING

Prospecting is a term that is recognized by people involved in the selling profession. Every good salesperson understands the value of good prospecting. Whether you are trying to sell a product or trying to sell yourself, it is vitally important to generate a list of prospects. Some of the prospects (or potential employers) you will be able to identify will result from your networking efforts. Otherwise, a good deal of your prospects may come from sources you have generated entirely on your own through market research and a process described as "Cold Calling."

“The mark of a good conversationalist is not that you can talk a lot. The mark is that you can get others to talk a lot. Thus, good schmoozers are good listeners, not good talkers.”

-Guy Kawasaki

“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”

-Dale Carnegie

COLD CALLING

Cold Calling means making initial contacts with individuals you've never met before. Whether in person, by mail or by telephone, it involves calling upon a stranger, a person with whom you have had no prior contact and for whom you have no detailed background information. It means approaching a potential employer without an appointment and introducing yourself. Once you have established rapport with this new contact, this previously unknown individual becomes a source of vital information who can now provide referrals and job leads. This person may be hiring or may know the names of potential employers who are hiring. To be sure, this informal method of contacting prospects requires an assertive, or even aggressive, approach on the part of the job seeker.

PERSISTENCE

Breaking into the Hidden Job Market will require persistence. An effective campaign will involve a combination of tactics: writing letters of introduction, sending out resumes, calling on the telephone several times, writing follow-up letters, and visiting the companies in person. Your goal is to establish rapport, create a positive impression, and get an interview. You must continually remind the employer of who you are.



PROSPECT LIST

Generating leads by creating a good list of qualified prospects is vital to job search success in the same way that it is vital to sales success. Your goal is to compile a list of possible employers (prospects) to whom you can target your marketing efforts. The list should include the names of contacts, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers, along with critical facts about the organization. Once you have a good list of prospective employers, you can then launch a campaign designed to establish rapport, gather information, and create demand.

TOOLS

This prospect list may be compiled in a number of different ways, utilizing a variety of resources, including the Telephone Directory (Yellow Pages), Chamber of Commerce Directories, Industrial Guides, Company Websites, Employee Directories, Annual Reports, Alumni Directories, Professional Association Directories, and Civic Organization Membership Lists. Local newspapers often run special sections about prominent people, new businesses, and community events.

Among the more popular industry and market rating services and databases are Hoovers, Manta, Standard & Poors, and Dunn & Bradstreet, and Lexis Nexis. On-line resources can be very helpful. Market and industry databases can be accessed easily through internet search engines using keyword searches.

The *Yellow Pages* Telephone Directory is probably the most ideal resource. Virtually every business, agency, organization, school system, and governmental entity is listed. Obtain the *Yellow Pages* for whatever city you intend to prospect. The categories are indexed by business type. Identify all the category headings that relate to your field.

GO FOR THE COMPANY

Pursue the company, not the job. When prospecting, don't concern yourself with ads for job openings and inquiries into who's hiring. Compile your prospect list based on organizations that are involved in the kind of work you want to do. Select companies in your field and then initiate contact with them.

When contacting a small organization, go for the general manager. In a larger organization, contact the person in charge of the functional area you are interested in (Dept Head, Director). Do not contact the human resource department.

Get to know the "gatekeepers." If the person you are trying to contact has an assistant, secretary, or receptionist who screens phone calls and arranges appointments for that person, introduce yourself and, without being pushy, try to establish rapport.

MANAGING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Successful job seekers begin by identifying their career goal; by determining what career direction they want to go in; by determining what career position they want to pursue. Next they conduct detailed research about the industry they want to go into and the companies within that industry they are the most interested in. Once the research is complete, it is time to begin the job search.

“Networking is marketing. Marketing yourself, marketing your uniqueness, marketing what you stand for.”

-Christine Comaford-Lynch

JOB MARKET STRATEGY

Conduct thorough job market research: Identify your market (city, area, region, location). Identify your industry (field). Identify the total number of companies (organizations) within your industry (field).

Within your chosen market, define your industry or field of interest. You may decide to choose your market based on the industries that exist there. Within your chosen industry, determine the total number of companies or organizations.

After you have created a prospect list based on solid market research, implement your strategy. Launch your campaign. Mail out (or e-mail) resumes and cover letters. And then make follow-up telephone calls.

FOLLOW UP TECHNIQUES

When following up by telephone, after you have mailed your resume and cover letter, you are likely to encounter a few obstacles. Consider the following tactics and techniques.

Voice Mail - If you telephone a contact and reach an answering machine or voice mail service, be careful about the message you leave. State your name. State the name of the person you are trying to reach. Do not state your business. Do not leave your telephone number. Do not ask him or her to return your call. Say simply: "Hello, this is John Smith. I was trying to reach Mike Jones. I'm sorry I missed you. I'll call you back this afternoon."

Gatekeeper - If you telephone a contact and reach a secretary, receptionist, or assistant, be sure to establish immediate rapport. Give a friendly greeting. Introduce yourself immediately. Ask for your contact by a familiar name (not a formal name). Say: "He's expecting my call."

Department Contact - If you reach the department head, director or manager, be sure to address him or her formally. Introduce yourself. Say: "I'm calling as a follow-up to confirm that you received the letter I sent you. I'd like to make an appointment to meet with you at your convenience. I've been researching your company. I am very interested in gathering industry information and investigating my career options. I would like to get your advice as to how someone with my background goes about exploring opportunities in your field."

SAMPLE NETWORKING LETTER

My neighbor, Ms. Jones, told me that you were a practicing actuary. She recommended you as a good person to talk to about the actuary industry.

I graduated from the University of Montevallo with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. I have extensive mathematics, managerial, administrative, sales, and customer service experience. I possess strong quantitative, mathematical, analytical, technical, and interpersonal skills. My career goal is to be an actuary.

I would like to get your advice. How does someone with my career ambitions go about learning more about the field of actuary? How does someone with my background explore her career options? What insights would you be willing to offer an aspiring professional like myself? I am writing to see if you would be willing to meet with me, either in person or by telephone, to share some of your expertise with me.

I'd be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you briefly at your convenience.

SAMPLE NETWORKING TALK

--I attended your "Effective Merchandising Techniques" presentation last Friday and introduced myself to you following your lecture. Your speech was very informative, and your examples were extremely enlightening. I left with a number of new ideas.

--I am in the process of a job change following my former employer's reorganization. I am writing to college friends whose opinions, insights, and advice I value.

--My professor, Dr. Smith, gave me your name and indicated that I should call you. I understand from him that you are an expert in the art history field.

--I was given your name by a mutual contact of ours, Helen McDonald, who suggested that I might get in touch with you for some assistance with my career plans. I am currently exploring the possibility of moving into the financial services field and Helen thought that you might be able to offer me some advice and direction.

--I have always been impressed by your company and its reputation in the industry for top notch marketing strategy. I am eager to learn more about your organization and would be grateful to you for any insights you would be willing to offer me.

