

When you talk to two friends, and they talk to two friends, and they talk to two friends, that's networking. Why network? Because networking is the number one way to get a job.

The theory is simple, but to get results you have to work at it. Start by identifying people who might know something about the type of job you want. Ask them if they know of any jobs available in your field. They may not, but may refer you to someone else who does. Each time you are referred, your job search becomes more and more informed.

TYPES OF NETWORKS

Personal

- Immediate family
- Relatives, near and far
- Close friends, neighbors and casual acquaintances
- Distant friends, old friends, ex-roommates
- Your personal doctor, lawyer, dentist, accountant, insurance agent, broker, personal banker, beautician, barber, manicurist, tailor, mechanic
- Your minister, priest, spiritual leader, rabbi, psychologist, psychiatrist or counselor
- Members of country clubs, social clubs, fraternal organizations, recreational groups, school parent groups, sports teams

Professional

- Colleagues in your organization: superiors, subordinates, peers, secretaries, support staff
- Colleagues in other organizations: customers, clients, collaborators
- Vendors, consultants, contractors, lawyers, accountants, investment bankers
- Competitors and professional acquaintances, Lobbyists, regulators and licensors
- Joint ventures, investors, shareholders
- Your advertising agency, PR firm or marketing representative, Pharmaceutical companies, nurses, patients, pharmacists

Organizational and Community Affiliations

- Board of Directors, board of trustees and advisory boards
- Community or volunteer organizations (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts)
- Professional, cultural and civic organizations.
- Philanthropic organizations and fundraising groups
- Public-private organizations; business development organizations; chambers of commerce, and certifying or licensing bodies

PURPOSE OF NETWORKING

- To compile information that helps with focusing your job search objectives, learning about trends, events or facts relevant to your search, and, hopefully, hearing about existing job openings;
- To gain as much exposure as possible in the job market; and
- To gather more names and referrals so that you can continue to expand your network, gain more information sources, get more exposure, obtain still more referrals, and so on.

GETTING STARTED

Start by determining what you want. Know your strengths, aptitudes, weaknesses, etc.

Then, establish priorities. Where will you start? Professional directories, colleagues, business correspondents during the past year? *Don't confine your network to contacts in your profession.*

Keep it all in perspective. The key to successful networking lies in understanding that you aren't asking for a giant favor that creates a giant debt and gives others leverage over you. On the contrary, skillful networking is low-key, low-intensity, low-stakes, low-demand and low-risk to both parties.

Know what you're asking for.

Get the ball rolling

- Conferences, conventions and meetings
- Requests by letter
- Telephone
- Face-to-face, information interview

THE NAME GAME

Always ask permission to use someone's name to help you get a networking meeting with someone.

EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

People skills needed for effective networking

- Assert yourself positively
- Take responsibility for getting what you want
- Don't apologize for asking for help
- Take the initiative in offering help
- Don't compare yourself to others
- Accept rejections as part of being assertive

Ask good questions

- Consider your goals before meetings and interactions. Formulate your questions beforehand.
- Use open-ended questions that start out with "How," "Why," "In what way.." to search out more depth of information and to keep conversations going.
- Use more specific questions that start with "Who," "When," "Where," and "What" when you need direct, factual information.

Listen with your "third ear"

- Listen carefully; concentrate on the speaker
- (If face to face), watch the speaker's body language for emotions and unspoken meanings
- Keep an open and accepting mind to what is being stated
- Listen for topics of mutual interest
- Give regular feedback through smiling, nodding, eye contact, and asking good questions.

Present yourself as a professional

- Make it a practice to "dress for where you want to get to"
- Wear clothes that look best on you and colors that make you feel good
- Wear and carry accessories that communicate your seriousness about your goals and where you want to go
- Prepare a 30-second introduction of yourself and practice until it sounds smooth and natural.

Show interest in empowering others

- People generally want to be valued. Show and tell them they are valued.
- Listen to them. Listening is an excellent way to communicate value.
- People are more likely to help you when you help to empower them.

NETWORKING A ROOM

1. **Go to the function with a goal in mind:** Decide what your networking goals will be for the event. What information or resources are you seeking to help you achieve your goal? Is this a likely event for getting that support? What types of people will be attending such an event? What is the agenda?
 2. **Present yourself professionally:** Go confidently. Go prepared. Dress to win. Wear your best colors and an outfit that helps you to feel your best.
 3. **Take your networking tools:** Take a supply of business cards, a good pen, and a pocket calendar.
 4. **Decide how many strong contacts you want to make for the evening:** Go for quality of contacts rather than for large numbers. Keep in mind your primary purpose for networking at this event. One or two quality contacts may be a reasonable goal.
 5. **Enter the room, center yourself, and observe:** Before getting into conversations with people, take a few seconds to center yourself. Mentally decide on 1 or 2 people you want to meet.
 6. **Initiate a conversation:** Smile, establish eye contact, extend a handshake, and introduce yourself. The person standing alone will appreciate your rescuing them. Initiate a conversation. There are three ways in which you can start a conversation: *talking about the situation, talking about yourself; and talking about the other person.* This can be done through asking questions, voicing an opinion, or stating a fact.
 7. **Ask good questions, and listen:** Ask no more than one or two key questions at the beginning. Refine your questions. Rather than asking, "Can I pick your brain?" say, "I need some advice. Can you help me?" This will generate a more positive response. Listen carefully to their reply; be willing to hear what they say.
 8. **Circulate:** Use your discretion as to the amount of time you spend with your contacts at the event. Remember that your goal is to get quality contacts. Be sure to exchange cards as you circulate. At the first opportunity, jot down some interesting points about those persons on the back of their business cards, such as how you met and what you discussed.
 9. **Don't get stuck:** Don't get drawn into lengthy business discussions at a networking event. Other valuable contacts may be missed. Arrange a follow-up meeting if you want to have a longer discussion. If you find yourself having difficulty in circulating, try these simple strategies: *"Here is a person I need to talk with. Will you excuse me?" "Here is a person I need to follow up with. Would you care to be introduced?"*
 10. **Follow up:** Be patient when you network. It takes time. Schedule follow-up times on your calendar. A follow-up can be a call to say, "Did you know...?" or it could be sending your contact a clipping of an interesting article. Clippings of articles will always sit favorably with any network contact. They help you appear knowledgeable and informed on ideas and events.
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