

Career Networking

Networking is the single most effective method of gathering career related information, developing contacts within a community or an industry, and uncovering the “hidden job market.”

The “Hidden Job Market”

Approximately 80% of available positions are never advertised. Most employers prefer informal and personal methods of identifying employees, and believe personal contacts result in more in-depth, accurate, and up-to-date information. Networking does not eliminate the need to use other job search methods, but it will produce helpful referrals from approximately 60% of your contacts.

Getting Started

The way to develop your network is by talking to people. The networking process will allow you to tell people about yourself, enlist their support, and help you gather information about available opportunities. The discussion can be formal, such as a meeting at the professional’s worksite, or casual, as it might be if you met an acquaintance at a party.

To build confidence and develop networking skills, start with people you already know: family, friends, parents of friends, instructors, and former employers or colleagues. People on this list whose work is different from your interests may be able to refer you to others. For example, your family physician or neighbor across the street may be able to provide several helpful referrals.

Additional Ways to Develop a Network

- Contact an organization’s human resource department directly and ask for the name of someone who works in a department of interest to you.
- Chambers of Commerce, community service centers, and membership rosters of professional associations are sources for career-related information.
- Attend functions such as “Business After Hours”, Open Houses, Local Community Events and TALK to people.

How to Network

Determine the types of referrals you need--are you seeking information about career options or specific employers and positions? Start by compiling a list of initial contacts and the questions you would like to ask them, such as:

- How does one learn about job opportunities in this field? In this organization?
- What skills and experience do you look for when you hire?
- Can you suggest anyone else in the field I might speak with?
- Would you please let me know if you hear of an opening?
- Do you know anyone working in this field? May I use your name when I contact them?
- If you hear of an opening, would you please let me know?

Increase Your Networking Success

- Make courteous initial contact, requesting a reasonable amount of the person’s time. Send a brief letter stating how you got the person’s name, why you would like to speak to them, and that you will call to arrange a meeting time. Include a copy of your resume, noting that it is for background information only.
- Ask for information, not a job. If you make a good impression the contact will let you know of any openings.
- Arrange face-to-face meetings whenever possible.
- Use affiliations to enhance your networking, such as professional and community-based organizations.
- Be politely persistent. There are many reasons why a person will be unavailable on the first or second try.
- Try to obtain several referrals from each person you contact. Organize your contact information to remind yourself when to make a phone call, write a letter, or send a thank you note.
- Follow up on leads and keep your contact information of your progress. If you do not pursue a specific suggestion, let your contact know since they may have already made a call on your behalf.

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