



The Value of Networking

There's a generally accepted theory regarding finding a job that says: It's not **"What you know,"** that's important; it's **"Who you know!"** That may sound like you're asking someone for preferential treatment and to just give you a job. But the fact is most jobs are not filled by responses to want ads. Placing a want ad is the last step an employer will take to fill a position. It may mean they haven't been able to promote from within or haven't found anyone worthy of the position.

Risky business

Networking may seem like risky business; however, taking a risk or stretching out of our comfort zones can sometimes pay off big. Networking is consistently cited as the most effective way to get a job. Some sources indicate that 75 percent of all jobs are found by networking.

Definition of networking

"Networking is making links from people we know to people they know, in an organized way, for a specific purpose, while remaining committed to doing our part, expecting nothing in return."

—Donna Fisher and Sandy Vilas, *Power Networking*

"Networking is the art of building alliances. Networking starts long before a job search."

—*The Riley Guide: Network, Interview & Negotiate*

But I don't have a network!

Oh yes you do! Everyone you know is in your network and everyone you know has his or her own network. Most of us network informally all of the time. We interact with people every day and cultivate relationships.

Job searching requires a more formal, planned approach to networking.

If you are hesitant about networking, remember:

- People like to give advice.
- People like recognition.
- People like to be helpful.
- Networking is a two-way street; it must benefit both people to be most effective.

Networking works

- About 75 percent of people get jobs through networking.
- It puts you in touch with the hidden job market.
- Networking targets your job search and can expand your mind to possibilities you never considered.
- Networking is active.

Joe Girard's Law of 250

Joe Girard is considered "The World's Greatest Salesman" by the Guinness Book of World Records. The Law of 250 is Girard's belief that everyone knows 250 people in his or her life who is important enough to invite to a wedding or who will show up at their funeral.

If you know 250 people, they each know 250 people. That's 62,500 second-line contacts – 15 million third-line contacts. Feel the power?

Networking isn't necessarily about asking for a job.

It's about learning what other people do, how they found their jobs, where the opportunities might be and who to contact. It's about keeping your eyes and ears open and asking members of your network to do the same. In fact, your first line contact does not usually lead to the job. The job you get may result from two, three or even four levels deep.

Mark Granovetter, author of "The Strength of Weak Ties," puts it this way: "Acquaintances are more likely than family members to give individuals direct information and to recommend them for opportunities."

Where do I start?

First, identify your first-line contacts. Print this document or make a list like the one shown here. The first column lists potential types of first-line contacts. Place a check mark next to the ones that apply to you. The second column provides a place to enter specific names. Use the third column to make notes on how a particular person can contribute to your networking.

| ✓ | Contact type | Name | Notes |
|---|---|-------------|--|
| ✓ | Friends | Bob Roberts | His father knows a lot about the X industry and may be able to give some advice. |
| ✓ | Family & Distant Relatives | Aunt Edie | Works in the mortgage industry and meets a lot of people. May be able to recommend someone in the financial industry to talk to. |
| ✓ | Friends of parents & relatives | | |
| ✓ | Former Employers & co-workers | | |
| ✓ | Neighbors | | |
| | Professors/Teachers | | |
| | College Alumni | | |
| | Former high school/college classmates | | |
| ✓ | Members of your religious congregation | | |
| | Professional Associations/Organizations | | |
| | Teammates | | |
| | People who provide service to you (i.e. banker, lawyer, hairdresser, dentist, doctor, etc.) | | |
| | Members of organizations for which you have volunteered and other volunteers | | |
| | Other | | |

The art of networking

1. Contact your first-line network by phone, e-mail or letter. Let these people know you are job searching and tell them your goal.
2. Ask if they can think of anyone with whom you might talk who might be a valuable source of information. Provide assurance that you are seeking guidance and counseling, not a job interview.
3. Begin contacting the second-line referrals by sending an “approach” letter or e-mail.
4. In the letter, indicate a date you will phone them to arrange a short appointment – in person or via phone. Do not send a résumé.
5. Schedule the referral interview.
 - a. Tell him who you are and why you are calling. Ask if convenient time to talk. Reference your letter and your first-line contact.
 - b. Indicate your hope that he will be willing to share his expertise and knowledge about opportunities related to your job goals.
 - c. Let him know you are not requesting an interview and that you will require only 30 to 45 minutes of their time.
 - d. Ask for an available date and schedule the interview.

The networking interview

- Do some research prior to the interview about the individual, company and occupation.
- Treat the discussion as a business meeting.
- Be concise in your approach about your skills, abilities and the type of job you are looking for.
- Develop a list of questions about the individual as it relates to information you are seeking; aspects of your profession; how your experience and skills might be used; how you can focus your job search; and how you can strengthen your résumé.
- Bring a notebook and a pen and take notes.
- Wrap up by thanking the individual for her time and most important, ask her for names of two or three other people she thinks might be able to help you in your job search.
- Get one or more referrals from her from people in her network.
- If you have a business card, carry it with you at all times.
- Follow up with a thank-you letter immediately.

Setting goals

- Decide how many contacts you will make each day.
- Consistently make phone calls, send e-mails and letters and continue to schedule networking interviews.
- Keep in touch with your contacts.
- Keep a log of all contacts, referrals and valuable information they provided.
- Continue to build your network when you get a job.

Networking may get you a job. It also will widen your circle of friends and social contacts. Just like life itself!

“Remember, part of networking is giving to other people. The best networkers know that networking is much more than passing around résumés. It involves building relationships over time.”

—Jack Chapman, *Build Your Network, Now!*