

# Conducting a Job Search through Networking

In quasi-scientific terms,  $1 + 1 > 2$  or  $2p + c = n$ , meaning one person + one person add up to more than two people because of their connections. Said differently, two people PLUS communication = **networking!**

## Background

**Networking** was first used as a word in the 1500s to refer to using fishing nets. Today, networking still refers to fishing—fishing for information, resources, contacts, and support.

Finding jobs is truly a **social** process. We all network. However, networking techniques have changed along with technology. The bottom line is that we share information with others and access information from others socially, personally, professionally, and technically.

Networking is the single most effective method of

- gathering career-related information,
- developing contacts, and
- uncovering the hidden job market (unadvertised positions).

Networking is the most productive technique for

- getting exposure to the job market,
- discovering opportunities, and
- landing employment!

**Networking is a lifelong relationship-building process that develops a broad range of interpersonal connections or contacts with whom you can have conversations with a targeted purpose.** Networking means making connections to make changes more easily!

According to Kelley, “Networks, then, act as a kind of informal, highly customized, personal ‘knowledge business **yellow** pages’ . . . providing a handy expert to fill in the brain-powered worker’s knowledge gap.”

We meet new people through our family, friends, and co-workers. We exchange connections or leads based on trust. We network. We expand our horizons. We find help for solutions to problems or suggestions for possible directions to take through our network. Communication is the basis of good networking!

The goal of **career networking** is to learn about other organizations and work our way to meet decision makers through our network.

In today’s job environment, we need to serve as our own company called **Me, Inc.** We need to be **intrapreneurs**, which is basically being an entrepreneur

within an organization. We essentially create our own career agency through networking. “Networks, then, act as a kind of informal, highly customized, personal ‘knowledge business yellow pages,’ providing a handy expert to fill in the brain-powered worker’s knowledge gap.” (*How to Be a Star at Work* by Robert Kelley)

**Networking is a way to compile information systematically, a means of gaining exposure in the job market, and an opportunity to expand contacts.** Our contacts have been aptly called “social capital assets!”

We expand our contacts by

- gathering resources,
- having greater exposure, and
- obtaining **referrals**.

Years ago, people typically found jobs through ads. “Early-career” individuals simply sent out résumés attached to form letters; headhunters found jobs for upper management. Things were simple. However, times have changed!

### How to Network

Maintaining networks is done systematically and methodically.

Networking is not random, not unstructured, not unplanned, and not brief. Networkers succeed if they are systematic, organized, persistent, and willing to invest time. Remember that networking is **not** interviewing for a job!

There are two ways to build a network:

- 1) **Mining** – a rather linear process. Mining is the less effective networking mechanism. It involves a lot of pick and shovel work on the part of the “miner,” who follows lead after lead. The “miner” does all the work and is the only person gathering information.
- 2) **Tuning in** – a cyclical process. Tuning in one’s antenna involves continuing communication with the many contacts along the way, deliberately crossing paths, and staying in touch with the contacts. In turn, the contacts stay in touch with the networker. There is ongoing communication. The contacts are tuned in, so to speak, to the networker who benefits from all his “antennas” out there. Networking works best if we choose our contacts wisely, strategically.

We must establish our networks with

- sincerity,
- integrity, and
- gratitude.

Be “well connected.” Know (or find out) who knows! Know what you don’t know! (*How to be a Star at Work: Nine Breakthrough Strategies You Need to Succeed* by Robert E. Kelley)

## Career Networking Steps and Tips

1. Identify the appropriate people to contact.
2. Set up a mutually acceptable time to speak with these people in person!

The human contact or the human touch is **essential** to develop an effective network. Because people use **visual cues** to “file” things mentally, it is very important to meet people face to face when networking. With modern technology, we are connecting through cell phones, computers, and teleconferencing but often find it **challenging to meet face to face!**

The best networking is **not** about talking. It is about **action!** Start the process by contacting people you already know to ask for suggestions of whom you might contact.

When you make the brief **initial telephone call** (one to two minutes), state

- who you are,
- who referred you (mention the name of the person twice),
- what you do,
- what happened, and
- what you need (Ask for 15 to 20 minutes of their time at a convenient location, not over a meal at a restaurant. Trying to eat and talk is not efficient. Meeting over a cup of tea or coffee is fine.)

## The Actual Information Interview

- Be prompt.
- Remember that you are doing career research or information gathering. It is **not** a job interview. Do **not** ask for or “fish for” a job!
- Make a good first impression.
- Be ready to tell your contact a bit about yourself.
- Prepare and ask **good** questions! Write them down in a small notebook or on a file card. You will probably have time to ask four or five questions. (Taking notes is very acceptable.)
- Monitor your body language. Respond with nodding, smiling, solid eye contact, and statements.
- Finish up the information interview within the requested amount of time but be prepared to stay longer if invited to do so.
- Request the names of at least **two** other possible contacts.
- Obtain the contact’s business card.
- Leave a copy of your résumé and ask for input on your résumé.
- Send a thank you note.
- Keep records.
- Capitalize on the contacts with intermediaries.

Good questions, of course, help you get the information you need and give you more control for getting your needs met. Using open-ended questions, rather than those that yield a “yes” or “no” response, result in useful responses.

Because 90% of how you present yourself is done visually, try to present yourself attractively. Dress to reflect the attire of those already working in the area of interest. Only 10% of your first impression is done verbally. Body language is very telling! **Listen!** Acknowledge that you are **listening!**

### The Thank You Note

Send a thank you note within 24 hours by way of regular mail or e-mail.

- Thank the person.
- Share a bit about what you learned.
- Tell what you are going to do.
- Send a résumé if you did not leave one.
- If you are interested, ask if any jobs are open now.

### In Summary

- Be “well connected.”
- Know (or find out) who knows!
- Know what you don’t know!

### Resources

Balzano, Frederica J. with Marsh Boone Kelly, *Why Should Extroverts Make All the Money? Networking Made Easy for the Introvert*

Figler, Howard, *The Complete Job-Search Handbook*

Kelley, Robert E., *How to Be a Star at Work: Nine Breakthrough Strategies You Need to Succeed*

Lindgren, Amy, “Networking Does Work”

Raye-Johnson, Venda, *Effective Networking: Proven Techniques for Career Success*

Richardson, Douglas B., *Networking: Insiders’ Strategies for Tapping the Hidden Market Where Most Jobs Are Found*

### Web Sites

<http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/NetWk1a.htm>

<http://www.wetfeet.com/asp/home.asp> - Search for “career networking.”

<http://www.quintcareers.com/networking-dos-donts.html>

<http://content.monster.com/career/networking/bigdeal/>

<http://www.profnet.org/faq.html>

<http://www.career.cornell.edu/careerConnections/contactsNetwork/generaInfo.html>

<http://www.jobsearch.about.com/library/weekly/aa112600a.htm>