

Networking

MORE LEADS = MORE CHANCES TO GET INTERVIEWS = MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO
RECEIVE JOB OFFERS = GREATER ODDS OF BECOMING EMPLOYED

Networking is not begging. In fact, you should not even be asking for a job; you should be seeking information that may lead to a job. Contrary to popular conceptions of it, the purpose of networking is not to get a job. It's to get introductions to companies that may have job openings and to people who may know about certain open positions within a particular field. Ask for help and you'll probably receive it. Ask for a job and you'll be directed to Human Resources.

Here are six rules for effective networking:

Rule #1: Get Started - Set Up a Meeting

The basic criterion for a person to be in your network is that he or she is willing to talk to you. This should include just about everyone, so select those who seem most likely to know lots of other people. The objective of your first interaction is to obtain an appointment with that person/contact. Hence, some short explanatory conversation is in order, one that explains the purpose of your meeting - namely, to exchange information. ...*Keep in Mind*: Pushing too hard for an appointment or for information will surely backfire on you: You could offend the very person you want to impress.

Rule #2: Present Yourself Well

It is essential that each contact in your network ends up thinking well of you. To increase the chances that they will, it helps to be friendly, well organized, polite and interested in what they have to say. No one *has* to see you, so be on your best behavior, as though you were meeting with a perfect stranger, even if you know the person well.

Rule #3: Learn Something

Be open to learn from your contacts, even if they don't know very much about the type of job you are seeking. Do try, however, to keep things centered on your goal, which is to make more contacts and to get more job leads. Of course, in situations where the contact does know about the type of job you want, there will be much to learn from them. They can tell you about what is going on in the field and other details that will be helpful for you to know.

Rule #4: Get Two Referrals

Getting referrals is essential to developing a network, so don't give up until you have at least two names of other people who might help you in your job search. You can get referrals from virtually anyone, but only if you are persistent in asking for them. Here are three questions that will generally get you one or more referrals, but often only after you ask the second or third questions:

1. Do you know of anyone who might have an opening for a person with my skills? If no, then,
2. Do you know of anyone else who *might* know of someone who would? If still no, then,
3. Do you know someone who knows a lot of people (in this or that field)?

Get used to asking each of the three questions until you get what you want - either a lead for a possible job opening, or the names of two people who might be of assistance to you in your search. When you receive a "yes" to any of these questions, make sure to get the details of the person to contact, including the correct spelling of his or her name and how to contact him or her.

Rule #5: Follow Up on Referrals

When you get the name of a new contact, you should follow up immediately. In most cases, you are better off to make the contact yourself, rather than to wait for your existing contact to make the call for you. This approach allows you to make sure that there is no delay in making the contact and assures that you maintain control of the contact and networking processes.

As you make more contacts, you will quickly begin to be referred to people you don't know. The nature of the process encourages each person to refer you to someone who knows even more about the job you want than he or she does. As you get referred along, you will begin to meet some very knowledgeable people who will tell you things you need to know. The more of them you see, the more you learn, and the better prepared you are for future contacts and for interviews. With each level of referral, you are also more likely to meet people who have the ability to hire you or who know others who do.

You have thus entered the "hidden job market." Most of the people you meet through networking in this way do not have jobs open or are unlikely to hire someone like you. However, they do know other people and are often willing to refer them to you - or tell someone else about you who, in turn, *has* an opening. In short, you are now in a position to be considered for future job openings. You have come to be known to them in the early stages of a job opening. While others are waiting for jobs to be advertised in the want ads, you are getting there before it is. You have a chance to get the job before it is ever advertised.

Rule #6: Send Thank-You Notes

Sending someone a thank-you note is a simple gesture of appreciation. These people have spent some of their valuable time helping to further your job search, so it is more than good manners to follow-up with a brief message expressing your gratitude to them. Thank-you notes also have practical benefits since the person who receives it is more likely to remember you and perceive you as being thoughtful and well organized. Impressions matter, and thank-you notes help to create positive ones.

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