

## **Power Networking**

### **Networking – Expanding your Circle of Influence**

Networking is an effective way of locating opportunities to gain access to potential career opportunities through contact with multiple individuals who may have first hand knowledge of employment opportunities.

It's not contacting everyone you know when you're looking for a job and asking if they know of any openings. Networking is the heart of building alliances. It is currently estimated that open positions are filled by the following activities:

Internal moves- 60 %

Networking- 30 %

Classified ads- less than 10%

Search firms- Less than 10%

Internet- Less than 5%

What is of equal interest is the extent to which the "human" issues involved have changed the job search environment. Many professionals who, years ago, would not have been receptive to networking calls, have either personally experienced, or directly witnessed, the effects of widespread layoffs themselves or of a family member.

### **Creating a network**

Take out your rolodex, stack of business cards, or other methods of retaining contacts. Make a list from the sources which include friends, professional colleagues, x-bosses, vendors, and social contacts. Everyone is a potential source of information and/or additional contacts. Do not be biased-use them all.

The purpose of networking is not to call strangers asking for a job. The purpose of employment networking is education, learning, and information collection. You can do this by increasing the number of contacts you have who may be aware of employment opportunities and who have the knowledge of you. It is a game of numbers. The more people you contact and the clearer your communication, the better the impression of yourself you leave, and the greater the odds that you will gain access and exposure to a previously unknown career opportunity.

### **You are actively networking when you**

- Seek past and present business associates
- Attend professional or trade association meetings,
- Talk to other parents when attending your child's sporting or music events,
- Volunteer for local community and charitable organizations
- Visit with other members of your social clubs or religious groups,
- Talk to your neighbors, friends and friends of friends
- Strike up a conversation with someone else waiting at the doctors office,
- Utilize alumni associations
- Target companies that interest you
- Search for online networking groups
- Subscribe to the industry bulletins and magazines or review these at the library
- Read the business sections of the newspaper
- Take applicable seminars and courses to mingle with other attendees
- Become active in professional associations. Be discerning. Attend a few meetings to determine the size and activity level of the chapter.
- Set realistic, but aggressive goals of making a certain number of calls a day/week.

### **Three levels of Contacts**

**“A” contacts-** Already known to you and give instant report. Can provide non threatening feedback on your presentation and refers you to “B” contacts

**“B” contacts-** Bridge people who have information on activities, people, and events in the field and are referrals to other “B” contacts and “C” contacts

**“C” Contacts –**

Can make hiring decisions

Can receive proposals

Can create jobs

Can refer you to others see contacts

The **Contacts** you develop may:

- Introduce you to leaders in your field
- Introduce you to other contacts
- Suggest companies you should target
- Recommended successful recruiters and employment agencies
- Provide guidance on your job search strategy
- Know of specific job openings
- Continue to act as your eyes and ears

### **How to network - Prepare yourself**

Networking is a time consuming task. Success in networking depends on personal commitment, dedication and thorough follow up. You must be prepared to rely on a proven process as a solution to your personal business task of finding a new job. You must be prepared to devote at least an hour of time every day to the networking processes. It is also key that you’re prepared for the inevitable rejection that will accompany it

Remember that networking is all about numbers. Like in baseball, where a consistently great hitter is someone who is only successful three of ten times, you must get to the plate often and take swings. Networking depends on your focused efforts. Most successful networkers are those who view the process as both a challenge and a game. Networkers are willing to continue striving in order to achieve success. You must also have the tools to track the progress and to effectively communicate with your network of contacts.

Over 90 percent of jobs available at any time are not advertised, but rather are part of the hidden job market. Savvy job researchers also use traditional methods of looking for possibilities: ads on web sites and newspapers, as well as career fairs and search firms. However, they concentrate much of their energy on tapping into their network of contacts.

**Brand yourself.** This is a concise statement which describes what you’re looking for, your skills and expertise, and related training and experience. Also called a 30 second commercial, it will be used in many phases of your job search campaign: networking, covering letters, phone conversations with potential employers, interviews when asked “tell me about yourself”. Make sure you have a clear idea of your target companies. Do you want to target an industry, companies with a different number of employees or sales volume, and/or a particular geographic area. For example, if you are seeking a marketing position, it may be more important what industry you are targeting than to say the company. With a position like accounting, industry may not play as large a role as the size of an employer would. Define what categories are most important for you so that you can explain this to people with whom you will network

## **The information networking interview**

When launching a professional job search, information interviewing is one of the most effective methods to use for:

- Exploring industry trends,
- Gathering information about skills needed for a specific career field,
- Finding out about specifics/organizations, and
- Uncovering potential employment opportunities

Using your contact list, call some of the people you know best and let them know that you are starting a job search process. Ask if they have any information/contacts that they know you should use for a more formal approach. Develop a strategy for each information meeting. Ask questions that will further your understanding of critical issues, business conditions, practices, changes and trends within specific industries. Networking involves requesting information. It is not a straight out request for employment. Asking straight out for job seldom works for two basic reasons:

- In any given situation, the chances are very small that job is immediately available
- People instinctively shy away from job requests. They feel uncomfortable listening to your pitch knowing that they don't have a job for you.

Here are the steps and purposes of an informational meeting

- Build a rapport with the person who is relevant to your career search
- Reassure them by making it clear you are not expecting them to know of any current opportunity, and by telling them what you are expecting from the meeting
- Present a clear, concise picture of your chosen career objective, a background summary, and description of the options or industry sectors you currently exploring. This will help them decide what type of information will be useful to you
- Ask relevant questions focusing from very general information to very specific information.
- Before you begin suggest an ending time for the meeting of approximately 30 minutes.

### **How to ask for an information meeting- Three approaches**

These guidelines tend to look formal but treat them as guidelines as to what to cover. Use your own words in your own natural style of speaking

#### **The “John Smith suggested I call you” approach-when you have a mutual contact**

I was speaking with John Smith the other day and he suggested I contact you. I'm in the process of making some important career changes, and he felt you might be able to give me some valuable advice. My purpose in requesting a brief meeting with you is to get some advice from you, and some insights into the marketplace that it might help me in my decision making process

#### **The “changing career directions” approach - a cold call without a mutual contact**

I'm in the process of making some important career decisions and your advice would be extremely helpful. I'm trying to learn more about the field of \_\_\_\_\_ to determine if they would be right for me. Your insights and experience to be very important in the decision . I would only need about 30 minutes of your time

#### **The “advice of my job search strategy” approach-cold call**

I'm in the process of making a career change, and hoped that I might get an opportunity to meet with you for about 30 minutes. My purpose in requesting a brief meeting is to discuss my plans with you and hear any suggestions you might have. Is there a time that is convenient for you?

However you manage it, once you have made contact with someone who you feel can assist you, you will want this individual to learn about you, while at the same time, subtly explore opportunities that they might know about. The information interview is designed to convey information about you and your potential, in a non intrusive manner. It uses questions to help illustrate your skills and subtly enlightens the other person to see the value that you represent. Some questions to consider are:

- How do most people break into this field
- What is the best education preparation
- What does it take, in your view, to succeed in this field
- What part of the job is the most challenging for you
- Which professional journals and organization should I know about
- Which companies in this field hire the most
- What additional skills would you recommend I acquire
- How did you go about getting this job
- What would you say are the lifestyle considerations
- What is the reason that people give when they leave this field
- What skills are required to be successful in this profession
- Regarding promotions, how quickly have most mid level employees advanced
- What other job would you suggest I find out more about before making a final decision
- Would you be willing to look over my resume and suggest how I could improve it
- Which of my skills do you consider strong points and which ones do you consider to be the weakest
- Would you suggest anyone else I should talk to? My I use your name as a referral
- What are the challenges facing this industry today
- Who do you consider to be the leaders in this industry
- Do you believe the industry is in a upswing

**Last minute tips** - If you asked for a 30 minute meeting, keep the meeting to 30 minutes. If you are asked for resume during the meeting, it is best to say that the purpose of this meeting is to help you refine your resume and that you'll be happy to send final version as soon as you can. Always send a personal thank you and your viewing after meeting. It provides an option to maintain contact with individual. A personal meeting is always preferable to a telephone conversation even if you know the people well. It is a more effective way to enlist the help of others in your job search

### **The Net Working first call – you know the job function you want**

If you are able to get through to the party, the first call should include the following components:

- An introduction of yourself
- Explanation of how you got their name
- The reason for the contact
- A quick review of your background
- A quick review of your desires
- Informational questions to link you to the next network contact

The following is an example of a typical first call to a person unknown to the caller suggested by a third party referral:

“Hello Mr. Franks, I’m Dick Smith the former marketing manager with XYZ Company. I would really appreciate a few minutes of your time. John Doe gave me your name and indicated that you might be a valuable information source for my networking activities. Is this a convenient time for us to talk or would you rather be confirm a time for later?”

By the way, John has been very helpful to me and he recommended you as a “must speak to” person.

Well, let me get to the point of my call. Due to the recent reorganization in my firm, I'm taking this opportunity to evaluate optional career directions. While at XYZ, I supervised a department of twelve, and successfully implemented several brand awareness campaigns in addition to developing and launching the "Widget" nation wide. I have fifteen years of merchandising experience with five of those as a business unit leader and manager. I'm seeking a career that will allow me to bring my business and profit orientated approach to marketing new product launches. I'm looking for the opportunity to share my knowledge of retail marketing and management with a national or even international organization. I'm open minded about relocation, but would prefer to stay in Alberta.. I've direct experience working with large and small companies, so the size of the organization is not critical but, since my career is focused on management, I would like to continue in a management role.

Mr. Franks, would you be aware of specific opportunities within your organization, or perhaps up or down your supply chain, that might fit my background and desires?"

If there is a positive response and a known opening, offer to send a resume to this person and ask, who should I contact in order to pursue this opportunity further.

If the person does not know, make direct contact with the vice president in charge of the specific functional area. Direct contact with the functional decision maker is more effective than other avenues of pursuit

If your contact does not know any specific opportunities, enhance your network of potential referrals by asking the following informational questions.

- What specific opportunities within other organizations are you aware of that might fit my background and desires
- Who do you know professionally that I should contact to increase my network
- Who do you know socially that I might contact to learn more about opportunities in this field
- What companies or organizations are you familiar with that may hold some hidden opportunity

After contacting any referrals gained from your initial call, send the initial contact (Mr. Franks) a thank you letter that has the following contents and verbiage:

Indicate the specific results from contacting each of the leads given. Even if you have only left messages, indicate your activity to demonstrate to this individual that you're making good use of his good advice and connections.

Enclose your resume with the following verbiage: "I have taken the liberty of enclosing a copy of my resume. Please feel free to pass it on to any one in your firm you feel may have an interest in my background".

The next paragraph should strive to generate additional names and allow future contact:" if you are like most of my contacts, you may in the course of your business they think of additional names or companies that I should contact. I would take the liberty of calling you in the next few days so that you can share those with me." Wait four days and make that call

### **Keep the pace going**

Continue the process and the results will be there. Also, use professional organizations and local network meetings. These are both sources of leads, contacts and moral support.

Once you have found a new position, send each person in your network a thank you note indicating your appreciation and your new contact information. Retain and consistently update you network information for future use.

### **Networking do's and don'ts**

Building a personal network is a vital part of today's strategic career and personal development. Each planned contact can lead to a unexpected ones, if you ask the right questions, and explore the possibilities. You can learn how to make your contacts work to your advantage by providing you with advice, information and referrals.

Recognize that when we network - we receive. However networking is a two way street that involves giving and sharing on both sides. The foundation of networking is mutual respect and we must "love people and use things". In networking, people are your allies. Networking can help you define a mentor, a friend, or a professional colleague, it can inspire you to attain new levels of productivity, success, and pleasure in your personal and professional lives.

### **Do's**

- Identify an organization, job title, career path, our person of interest to you.
- Do research so that you can talk intelligently to you contact
- When you speak to that person, ask if this a good time
- Give a quick summary of who you are and what you want. Focus on what you have in common. Have a goal. State your purpose
- The flexible
- Ask for information and advice, not at job. Be prepared with the short list of questions or topics.
- At the meeting, ask for referrals
- Listen attentively
- Respond with intelligent questions or comments.
- Ask for a resume critique
- Be courteous, write a thank you note

### **Don'ts**

- Don't push yourself on someone who is not interested or able to speak to you
- Don't ask personal questions or questions about money
- Don't ask for a job
- Don't overstep your time limits
- Don't come unprepared, either about the company, the career path, or yourself,
- Don't interrupt
- Don't focus entirely on your own needs. You're there to learn
- Don't ask the person to circulate your resume for you
- Don't forget to say thank you
- Don't become a pest, continuing calling the contact for advice and referrals after your initial meeting

### **Networking tools**

Coupled with your commitment and desire for success, the essential tools for effective profession networking are:

#### **Your telephone system**

To ensure that your return calls to not get a busy signal, it is recommended that you use the voice mail system rather than an answering machine. Persons who do not know you may only call back once, and you don't want to miss the call. Be sure your voice mail message is clear and professional

Check your messages often. Call back immediately. Your telephone skills will be seen as an indication of you general follow up skills. Also since people generally return calls during specific time frames, the return caller may very well be at their desk and be available to receive your return call

### **Messages**

Develop clear and concise messages that can be delivered directly or indirectly. Separate messages should be developed for persons who you know personally and for those you do not. You should also develop a script for leaving voice mail messages.

Be concise and do not fear stating that you are networking in order to pursue a new career opportunity. When introducing yourself to strangers, it is suggested that you use the phrase, "I am Joe" instead of "my name is Joe" as this demonstrates a more powerful and self confident person. In most instances you will be either blocked by voice mail or you will have the recipient and a less than convenient time. In either instance, you only have a limited amount of time in which to make your point. You should develop a short dialogue about your career experience and what type of opportunities would be of interest to you. Be sure to use power words such as successfully, accomplished, drove, implemented, skilled, experienced, leader, team oriented.

### **Contact management system**

You will need a method to accurately keep track of each contact and the information that is supplied by each one. This can be as simple as a notebook, an index card, or contact management software. You must be accurate in recording th persons full name as well as the information given.

### **A well written resume**

This is your advertisement for an interview. Make sure that your resume is clear, concise and contains accurate information about your career. The one or two page combination style resume is the standard and best received. The best choices for paper is white bond paper.

### **Access to word processing and quality printing**

Good follow-up skills depend on timely and effective written communication. Word processing also gives you the power to create multiple follow-up letter formats. These can be quickly tailored to the immediate circumstance. This tool can also allow you to create your own letterhead without the expense of professional printing.

### **Consistent image**

Before mailing any documents have someone with excellent written communication and proofing skills review the documents. Spelling and grammatical errors will badly tarnish your image. Someone who does not know you well should proofread your resume. This will help ensure that the message you want to convey is clear, meaning full and accurate

### **Open-ended Questions**

Yes/no questions will most likely get you a "No" response. Open ended informational questions usually force the respondent to give you valuable insights that can further the dialogue and provide information. Ask these questions slowly and wait for responses. Give the respondent time to analyze and answer the question. End the call with sincere thanks and:

"Mr. Franks, I'll be sure to tell John Doe that you said hello and if you hear of any opportunity, or think of any additional networking contact, I would really appreciate called me at \_\_\_\_\_

### **Next steps**

Record the information in your database or contact system. Promptly contact all referrals gained from this first call. Be sure to leave quality personal or voice mail messages. Take good notes- they will be used later.

## **Develop good telephone skills**

Good telephone communication requires skills—skills that can be learned. Just because someone talks on the telephone a lot does not mean they are effective communicators. In fact, many people who use the telephone frequently exhibit some very offensive habits. It is never too early or too late to learn good telephone communications skills. Telephone skills are marketable talents that many potential employers value. Using the telephone is an effective and efficient use of your time and resources. The telephone can get you behind closed doors; it will help you contact hard to reach people.

### **Scripting**

Preparation is critical to good telephone communication. It is not wise to call someone and just start talking. This may work for family and friends, but it will invariably kill a job search or networking effort. Telephone communications in a work search campaign are business calls, and need to be creative. Actually, they are sales calls. Some people have a hard time with the idea of telephone sales. None of us likes a pushy telemarketer, but many of the same concepts and strategies that go into successful telephone sales go into your job search campaign. A business or sales caller has only about twenty seconds in which to capture the listener's attention. Therefore the communication has to be to the point and concise. There is no time to wander. Effective scripting is the answer.

Scripting is simply planning what you are going to say before you say it. Most people script important conversations before in their mind; they just don't realize that this is what they're doing. Have you ever made an important call and found yourself hesitating to dial the last number? Have you hung up before you are finished dialing? You were probably still in the process of scripting, in your mind, what you were going to say. You may want to take it a step further and write down what points you plan to communicate. This is exactly what skilled telemarketers do; they have a flexible script that they follow.

### **Scripting basics**

Have a clearly defined objective for the call. You may be seeking information, want to schedule a meeting, or present your qualifications to a potential employer

Have a secondary objective. Often you will not achieve your primary objective, But every telephone call is an opportunity to solicit information that will further your cause

Know the name of the person to whom you wish to speak. If you do not have person's name, then obtaining it from the receptionist becomes your first priority

Outline what you want to say; write it down. This is important in the early stages of cold calling for when the call is very important. Later on, you will informally script most of your calls in your head. **Do not read your script**, your presentation should be natural and spontaneous.

The script will depend on the goal of the call and whether you know the person you are calling. However a good script should include:

Introduction: Tell the person who you are

**Leading statement:** A quick statement designed to get the person's attention

**Body:** State your purpose for the call

**Close:** Accomplish your goal, ask for information, schedule the meeting

### **Basic principles of telecommunications**

#### **Listen for the "Buy" signals**

A buy signal is evidence even in a networking context that you have captured the person's attention. "Buy" signals usually take the form questions. For example, when someone is asking questions about your qualifications, they are, for the moment, interested in you.

#### **Objections**

Objections come in many forms and often signify that you've not explained yourself adequately. "We are looking for someone with more experience or education", or "Sorry, we're not hiring right now". Press on to your goal and continue to sell your qualifications. Look for ways to eliminate objections.

### **Listen carefully**

Communication is what is said, how it said, and the body language that is used. It is important to listen carefully to what you are saying, how you are saying it, and how you are being received. If you sense that you have called at a bad time, politely ask if there is a better time.

### **Location**

Call from a quiet place where you can concentrate. Do not call from a noisy restaurant, cell phone, or street corner. Avoid calling when the kids are yelling or the dog is barking

### **Organization**

Have all of your job materials nearby and take notes of the general content so you can follow up.

### **Follow up**

It is the persistent 20% who make 80 % of the successful sales. The best time to plan a follow up is when you make the contact. While you have a contact on the phone, politely ask when you may call back. Keep a follow-up calendar and maintain a record of your contacts. If you agree to call back, be sure to do so in a timely manner. If someone agrees to call you, state the best time to be reached. The last thing you want to do is sit by the telephone waiting for call that may never come.

### **Practice, practice, practice**

Telephone skills, like all skills, have to be practiced to be mastered. Start with low risk calls. Practice your presentation with a friend and go over your script aloud so that you can hear your own voice and tone

### **Voice mail**

Like it or not, voicemail is part of our lives. Speaking to a machine adds a new dimension to telephone skills. It is a good idea to know what you will say if you do get someone's voice mail. Having a brief script ready in this instance will enable you to leave a message that is upbeat, simple, clear and concise, and motivates a callback.

Remember, your message should be twenty seconds or less. It is amazing how an otherwise skilled telephone user can come across as monotone and unsure on in message machine. If you have an answering machine, be sure your messages is polite and professional, and return your in-coming calls promptly.

### **Other ideas that work: Tips and hints**

#### **Telephone cold calls**

- Wear a smile when speaking on the telephone-they may not see it but they will hear it in your voice loud and clear
- Dress up when making telephone contacts as you would for an interview-your professional and preparation will be heard in your demeanor
- If you can't get past a shrewd receptionist, try before 8:00 AM, during lunch, after 5:00 PM for Saturday morning. If you still can't get through, solicit the receptionist assistance
- Look for ways to genuinely compliment the person or the company
- Don't apologize for making contact. You have a product they need and a right to present yourself
- Don't sell yourself from a position of weakness or apologize for what you do not have or have not done. Sell yourself from position of strength and stress those skills, attributes and accomplished attractive to the employer.

## **The networking business card**

One very practical device for facilitating networking is to use networking business cards. Essentially, they are the same as normal business card, with the name, address, and phone number, But instead of a title you should have a short description of your greatest career asset or interest. For example “seeking Chartered Accountant position”. This “seeking” line replaces the standard title on most business cards and makes it stand out in the eyes of the receiver. You can order 200 cards for a minimal cost. Be professional in your presentation..

## **Using the internet**

The internet can be a great way to begin those casual relationships that turn into wonderful networking opportunities. Since we are not face-to-face with other person, the stress of making these new connections is really alleviated, but don't think that it is an easy market out there . It is very important to begin these relationships in the right way. Since we can't use our voices or body language to express ourselves, we are limited to making sure that the words we use, and the way we in which they are presented, properly represent our intentions.

## **Advantages of on-line networking**

- There are thousands of discussion groups and community forms covering hundreds of subjects
- You can break the ice before meeting someone in person
- You can listen, engage, or be engaged as you wish. No one can see you sweat, and you don't have to feel like a wallflower since no one can see you standing off by yourself
- Often, recruiters are behind the lists in hopes of finding potential candidates

## **Disadvantages**

- Networking online is just as difficult as networking in person. In fact it may be harder because you can't really establish a personal relationship online
- First impressions count even more. Be careful with your first public posting
- You're online behavior manners more than you think. Don't be a net-jerk. Take your cues from others who posted ahead of you.
- Many job related networking groups are located within some of the larger job postings sites such as Workopolis and Monster. Others may be found independently through various newsgroups lists and “chat” groups.

## **Making contact on-line**

How do you know who to connect with online. Look for postings by someone who seems to be knowledgeable about the topic discussed. Note their e-mail address at the top of message, and look for signature information citing their organizational affiliation, position in the organization, and more complete contact information.

Once you have identified the mailing list or newsgroup participants who you want to contact, prepare your e-mail letter very carefully. Be professional and especially polite, and double check for grammar and spelling errors before sending out your message.

Be sure to contact the person directly and not through the list or newsgroup. Do not post general messages to the list or newspaper group and ask if anyone is willing to talk to you

The concise, identify yourself, state why you're contacting this person and list some of your interest and where you noticed some correlation with his/her interests as noted in the postings you read

Do not send this person a copy of your resume. You are networking, trying to establish a relationship that extends far beyond just please help me find a job. A resume will blow everything to bits of this point. Just

relax and let the relationship build to a point where you are either asked for a resume or you feel comfortable asking for advice on preparing one

Request a follow up to this e-mail, via phone or e-mail. Give your contact the choice of how to continue.

You will be pleasantly surprised at how many people will offer to help if you can open the dialogue properly.

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