

RULES OF THE NETWORKING HIGHWAY

1. NETWORK EVERY DAY, AND SET GOALS

The cardinal rule of networking is to **never lose touch with people**. Rather than wait until you are in trouble, always keep the networking wheels in motion. If you let too much time pass, you will have lost a potentially valuable contact. **You should set flexible networking goals**. Try to make 5 to 10 networking calls a day, either for new contacts or to maintain existing ones. If you make 10 calls a day, that's 50 calls a week or 200 calls a month. By the law of averages, you're bound to add at least a dozen valuable links to your networking chain.

2. EVERYONE CAN BE REACHED SOMEHOW

Busy people may be **hard to pin down, but not impossible to pin down**. Successful networkers rate early evening, between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m., as the prime time for reaching busy people. Much of the staff has gone home and this is the best time to connect with bosses and senior executives, because, in the peace and quiet, they are getting important work done or doing some networking of their own. It's the perfect time.

But remember, start with a healthy attitude towards people in power. Don't put them on pedestals **because they have big jobs**. Everyone can be reached, if you know how and when. The hard part is breaking through the fortress-like structures that insulate and protect them.

Every organization has gatekeepers. Your job is to find them, connect with them, and impress them. They have the power to open the creaking doors to the inner circle, selectively doling out keys to the inner sanctum. Alienate the gatekeepers, and your career is on permanent hold. Befriend them, and there is no telling how far you will go.

3. INFORMATION IS EVERYWHERE

You may be walking down the street or entering a hotel lobby, an airport, a bus station, or a party. **You never know who you are going to meet**. If you talk to someone for 20 minutes, you may be surprised at what you will learn. Mention that you are looking for work, and the person you nearly dismissed as unimportant may tell you that their next door neighbor works for a successful manufacturing company and there will be an opening in your field next week, but they are trying to keep it quiet until then.

4. KEEP A NETWORKING DIARY

Keeping a journal or a diary can be a real drag. It takes discipline. But it's worth the effort. If you are conscientious about building a network, you are going to be speaking to hundreds of people. The only way to keep track of them is to make organized, written notations. **Separate hot from lukewarm leads.** List names, addresses, telephone numbers, and observations.

A few sample entries might look like this:

September 14: Information interview with Clide McFatter at Stevens International. Nice guy. Picked up dirt on Stevens. Not jobs, cutting back. Told me to call old friend Fanny McPherson, information specialist at Twiggy Time. She's well connected and will candidly tell me what the possibilities are at her firm.

September 16: Ran into Ben Bozo at alumni association, he promised to hook me up with his buddy at Bartol International. Told me to call him back on September 18.

September 18: Called Ben Bozo back. He said his buddy is really interested in talking with me because there is a second opening that may be developing.

September 19: Called Ben's buddy, Fred Smith, at Bartol International. Fred said not even the staff knows yet about the vacancy that is developing, but he wants me to stop by tonight around 6:30 to talk.

IN CONCLUSION...fruitful networking takes **WORK**. But once you get into it, you will be pleasantly surprised to discover that it is not all that bad. It can actually be fun. Done right, it can yield big rewards and **GET YOU A JOB!**

Source: Resumes Don't Get Jobs by Bob Weinstein

NETWORKING NOTES

- **If you don't have friends in high places, don't worry.** They're not always the best sources for jobs, anyway.
- **Don't expect too much.** Networking contacts won't produce a job; they can produce a lead.
- **Never beg or mention that you are desperate.** If you plead, you will appear unprofessional and make others uncomfortable. Desperation causes people to avoid you because they have concerns of their own.
- **Don't be vague.** Give your contacts the details they need to help you find a job. Otherwise, you will get leads that are inappropriate.
- **Don't bug them.** Get back to your contacts only when there has been a new development or you have something to report. Don't call and ask if they "have anything for you."
- **Follow up on leads.** Never ignore a lead given you by a contact. If you have done your homework by describing what you are looking for and giving your contacts a copy of your resume, you should not get inappropriate leads.
- **Networks can start anywhere.** Don't overlook anyone. A person doesn't have to be famous or influential to be helpful. Remember: You never know where a good job lead will come from.
- **Remember a thank-you.** When someone helps you, let them know you appreciate their efforts. If you get a job through a contact, write the contact a thank-you note. You never know if you will need them again!
- **Don't depend on networking alone.** Networking is only one component of a job search. Go full scale; be certain you are including all search activities.

SKILLS FOR THE NETWORKING MEETING

Remember Where You Are Going

Everything you do up to this point in your job search should be aimed at getting a job interview. The skills you identified, the goals you set, the resume you wrote, and the information you gathered are carefully related to one another so you will have maximum impact for communicating your qualifications to employers who, in turn, will decide to invite you to a job interview.

There are secrets to getting a job interview that you should know before continuing further with your job search. The most important secret is the informational interview, a type of interview which yields useful job search information and may lead to job interviews and offers. Based on prospecting and networking techniques, these interviews minimize rejections and competition and quickly open the doors to employers. If you want a job interview, you first need to understand the informational interview and how to use it for maximum impact.

Prospect and Network for Interviews

What do you do when your resume is ready? Most people send cover letters with their resume in response to job listings, then they wait to be called for a job interview (**THE RESPONSE APPROACH**). Others mail numerous copies of their resume to employers in the hope that they will hit an opening and receive a telephone call (**THE SHOT GUN APPROACH**). Both approaches are relatively passive activities. Viewing the job search as basically a direct-mail operation causes many job seekers to be disappointed in discovering the realities of direct mail – a two percent response rate is considered good!

Successful job seekers orient themselves toward face-to-face action. Being proactive, they develop interpersonal strategies in which the resume plays a supportive rather than a central role in the job search. They first present **themselves** to employers; the resume follows only at the end of a face-to-face conversation.

Throughout the job search you will acquire useful names and addresses, and meet people who will assist you in contacting potential employers. Such information and contacts become key building blocks for generating job interviews and offers.

Since the best and most numerous jobs are found in the hidden job market, you must use appropriate methods. Indeed, research and experience clearly show the most effective means of communication are face-to-face and word-of-mouth. The informal, interpersonal system of communication is the central nervous system of the hidden job market. Your goal should be to penetrate this job market with proven

methods of success. Appropriate methods for making important job contacts are **prospecting and networking**. Appropriate methods for getting these contacts to provide you with useful job information are **informational and referral interviews**.

Advantages of Informational Interviews

By conducting informational interviews and networking, you help the employer solve their problem by providing a chance for them to examine what you can offer. You gain several advantages by conducting these interviews.

Advantages of Informational Interviews

1. You are less likely to encounter rejections since you are not asking for a job – only information, advice, and referrals (and to be remembered in the future if there is an opening).
2. You go after higher-level positions.
3. You encounter little competition.
4. You go directly to the people who have the power to hire.
5. You are likely to be invited to job interviews based upon the referrals you receive.

This job search approach has a much higher probability of generating job interviews and offers than the more traditional response and shotgun approaches.

Conducting a Networking Meeting With Sample Questions For Informational Interviews

Introductions

When meeting with your networking contact for the first time, establish rapport by thanking them for the meeting. Refresh the contact about the referral source and emphasize that you are there to gather information and advice about your job search. Use this time to begin building a long-term relationship.

Background and Purpose

Give a brief description of your career using the 30-Second Summary as a jump off point. Discuss how you see your job search campaign or career change and what you expect to happen at this meeting. This sets the agenda and expectations. Provide them with a clean copy of your resume for their review.

Questions about the Interviewer

You want to have them explain how they became employed with their company and what attracted them to the company. Ask about their background, the industry, the field, and the competition. Query on their motivations, their likes and dislikes with the job and the industry.

- ▶ Why did you join this company?
- ▶ What is your background? What has been your career path?
- ▶ How did you get into this field, or how did you obtain your job?
- ▶ What are the basic prerequisites for your job?
- ▶ In your current position, what do you do on a typical day?
- ▶ What are the major responsibilities of your job?
- ▶ What do you like most about your job? Least?
- ▶ What are the most interesting aspects / liabilities of your job?
- ▶ What part of your job could be dull or repetitious?
- ▶ What motivates you to stay/ remain?
- ▶ Are there any jobs that are similar to yours, with different titles?
- ▶ If you could start over again, would you change your career path in any way? Why?

Position/ Field Questions

- ▶ What is the best way to obtain a position to start a career in this field?
- ▶ How long does it usually take to move ahead on this career path?
- ▶ In your opinion, where would my skills and experience best fit?
- ▶ What are other areas in this field to which you might transfer your skills?
- ▶ What courses might one take that would be of benefit in this field?
- ▶ What entry-level jobs would qualify me for the type of job that you have?

- ▶ What kind of training do companies give to people entering this field?
- ▶ What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
- ▶ Is there a demand for people in this field?
- ▶ How do you see the jobs in this field changing over the next two to three years?
- ▶ What opportunities do you see/envision in the near future?
- ▶ To get promotions, is job-hopping necessary?
- ▶ What would be the earning potential if I entered this field?

Organization, Company or Industry

- ▶ What are this organization's strengths?
- ▶ What are the areas the company could develop more fully?
- ▶ What qualities do you seek in a new hire?
- ▶ When you hire, where do the people come from?
- ▶ What is their education, background, skill set?
- ▶ What types of people are successful here?
- ▶ How do you build a team?
- ▶ What are the most common problems in this job...firm...industry?
- ▶ Where do you see your company/industry in the next 1-2 years?
- ▶ What do your primary customers tell you their needs will be in the next 1/2/5 years?
- ▶ Who are your major competitors?
- ▶ Do you know if competitive companies are growing in this field?
- ▶ Why are they growing?
- ▶ What changes do you see happening in your industry?

- ▶ What were your sales/profit trends in the last 5 years?
- ▶ Where and when do you plan to expand?
- ▶ What is the major challenge your company faces?
- ▶ What new types of training or expertise will be required of your employees?
- ▶ What is the background of most senior level executives?
- ▶ Would it be possible for me to walk through your operation and see how work is done here?

Your Search

- ▶ Ask for advice for your job search campaign. You may be meeting with someone who has just completed a job search. Pick their brains and gather ideas.

“If you were in my shoes, what would you do?”

- ▶ Here is my list of target companies. Can you tell me anything about them or how I might access them?
- ▶ Who should I be talking to?
 Is there anyone you could recommend that I network with?
 Could I use your name as a referral?
 What is the best way to be introduced to _____?
- ▶ What do you think is going to be my biggest obstacle to finding a position?
- ▶ Do you see any other possibilities for someone with my skills within an organization similar to yours?
- ▶ What publications would you recommend that I consult?

Trade Shows and Conventions

- ▶ Trade shows or conventions are great places to meet a lot of people and companies at one time.
- ▶ I'm attending _____ convention next month in _____. What companies do you recommend that I target?
- ▶ Who should I contact ahead of time so that we can meet while I'm there?

Career Changes

- ▶ Since I'm making a career change, what is the best way to establish credibility?
- ▶ Are there opportunities that I may have overlooked?
- ▶ What advice do you have for me as I begin my career transition?
- ▶ Please give me an honest assessment of how you feel I handled myself in our meeting today. Do you have any suggestion for improving my effectiveness?
- ▶ Remember to listen carefully and take notes throughout the networking meeting. If the contact brings up perceived or real obstacles, ask how he or she would go about overcoming it?

Referrals

Always try for two or three referrals; names, addresses, phone numbers. Also ask for any possible internal referrals within the contact's company?

Occasionally, the contact may not give you any names. If they are unwilling or say they don't know anyone, ask about the possibility of contacting people you have already identified.

"Do you know Jim Fergle over at ABC? Do you think it would be beneficial for me to call him?"

Give them permission to pass your resume on to any recruiters that may contact them.

Ending the Meeting

It is polite that you **keep your eye on the time**. If you asked for 15-20 minutes, let your contact know that the time frame that you asked for has expired. Thank him or her for the time. **Leave the decision to extend the meeting with the contact. It is possible for him or her to invite you to stay longer.** Leave when your business is completed.

Always **summarize your key points and confirm any activities or meetings that require follow-up.**

It is imperative to **thank your contacts for the meetings and any information provided.** Ask them if you could keep them apprised of your progress so you can develop your network and let them know how their recommendations have worked.

This allows you the opportunity to keep in touch and to capitalize on any opportunities they may hear about.

Without exception, write a thank you note within 24-48 hours of the meeting!

Thank them for their time and summarize the meeting. Also remind them of people they recommended you contact. This is beneficial to demonstrate your following up on their advice and to remind them of who they recommend you contact.

Finally, maintain contact, respect your networking contacts' time and let them know when you receive and accept a position. You never know when you may have the opportunity to repay them through business or support in their job search.

NETWORKING NOT WORKING? GET WORKING!

"Networking" is a mysterious-sounding word in the computer-age business world. When you first looked for a job, your elders may have told you, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." Then, as you grew up, it was known as being "well-connected." Nothing has changed, except that the job seeking sources have become better. Here are some of them:

1. Personal Contacts

The best way to look for a job is through acquaintances, including business associates, former supervisors and co-workers, and friends. There are two ways their assistance should be sought:

Notifying you about opportunities. Their motivation to assist is best utilized by asking them to be your eyes and ears. Helping you enhances their self-esteem. They often delight in letting you know inside information or leads that they learned about through personal observation.

Presenting your background. Since they are your acquaintances or friends, they will be working for you with the best intentions. Therefore, you should provide them with copies of your resume and other background information. Explain clearly what type of job you are seeking. Let them know (gently) if they are furnishing information on jobs that you **don't** want. But be grateful for any assistance, no matter how ridiculous, or you may lose more than a resource and a reference – you may lose a friend. And remember, **you never know where a good job lead might come from.**

2. Seminars

Check with your national or state trade association about upcoming meetings or seminars in the field of your choice. These usually take place at local hotels or convention centers. If you are attending, bring background information and even business cards to leave with persons you meet. **You never know who might provide you a job lead.**

3. Employment Agencies

If you are re-entering the job market, you should have at least six employment agencies assisting you. Today there are computerized placement networks that give private agencies the ability to access thousands of job openings and backgrounds of applicants who are residing in a single zip code or state anywhere in the country. The matching of skills, desires, and locations has completely revolutionized the prescreening process. If you have been away from the job market for a while, you will be pleasantly surprised to learn that most fees are now paid by employers. Employment agencies are found in almost all regions and are in the Yellow Pages under "Employment Agencies," "Employment-Permanent," "Personnel Agencies," and similar headings. **A word of advice: Don't be too rigid about you ideal job.**

Go on an interview even though the job description may not exactly fit what you are looking for. Many good jobs are bypassed because a candidate ruled them out before even going on an interview.

4. Pyramiding

Another networking strategy is called "pyramiding." This involves capitalizing on the name of one individual to gain an interview with another. Your purpose would be to use the "power" of one name to gain an interview in a secondary firm.

For example, if you were meeting with the executive of a company and you felt that the interview might not be productive, you could lead into a discussion concerning another firm. You would then ask your interviewer whether or not he/she felt that it would be a firm for you to target. At the very least, he is likely to say, "Of course, you ought to contact them." Your next step would be to write the president of the firm something like, "In my recent meeting with Mr. X, he suggested that it might be of mutual benefit if I arranged to speak with you."

If handled properly, this strategy of pyramiding can be enormously effective in accessing the "hidden job market."

5. Developing Contact Through Part-Time Work

Today, it is common for many people to have a second job on a part-time basis. For example, an ambitious MBA in her late twenties took a job as a limousine driver three evenings each week. Her assignments involved meeting executives at Newark International Airport and driving them to their homes in northern New Jersey and Westchester County. By the eighth week of her part-time job, she had a list of thirteen executives that she could call, and in the next four weeks she obtained three job offers through these contacts.

If you've never been an extrovert, you should try to become one if you are going to need a job. Also, you should always keep some record of the names of individuals you meet. **One of the best ways to impress is to be able to quickly recall someone's name from a single brief meeting.** If you can achieve even a small degree of prominence, this could bring you leads and make it much easier to develop and expand existing contacts. If you have any writing ability, you might try your hand at authorizing some articles and submitting them to the trade press.

Anything you can do to gain increased visibility will result in easier initiation of new contacts. Taking an active role in community affairs, politics, and service clubs, along with speaking at seminars and trade associations, will serve as a means of accomplishing the same end.

6. Developing Contacts Through Major Events

Trade shows and conventions can be a very efficient medium for developing contacts. In one location, you usually have dozens of people assembled, all of whom are associated with an industry and all of whom are there because they want to talk to people. Usually workers at all levels are present. If you are not able to make a contact at the management level, you can at least make a friend down the line. This person can then serve as your starting point for making higher contacts within the company.

For example, a sales assistant can introduce you to a salesman, who can introduce you to a branch manager, who can introduce you to a regional manager, who can introduce you to a general manager of a division. Of course, **the higher you can start, the better, but the important thing is to at least start someplace.**

If you are unable to gain admittance to a convention or trade show, there are other options. It is relatively easy to identify all the companies attending. They are often printed in a brochure available in advance of the show, and sometimes they are listed on an information board.

One imaginative person, a branch sales manager, went to a convention and visited each of the major hotels where the conventioners were staying. Through a determined personal effort, he met dozens of people in both hotel lobbies and hospitality suites hosted by organizations. He had a considerable advantage later when many of these people remembered him (he had also learned where some of the inside job opportunities were).

7. The Spot Opportunity Approach

Many people have won job offers by cleverly anticipating an organization's needs. They did this by screening information that came their way, and identifying anything that contained the seeds of an employment opportunity.

Their strategy for accomplishing this included reading the trade press for every industry and occupational interest, as well as general business magazines and local newspapers and magazines.

In their daily reading, they made notes of such events as expansions, new products, reorganizations, plant openings, and promotions. Sometimes a feature article would highlight an expanding and progressive company. In some instances, advertisements supplied the tip that an opportunity might be in the making.

Bad news (unfortunately) can also be a source of employment opportunity. Bankruptcies, articles featuring the problems of companies or industries, and their competitive struggles, are usually indications that the firms would welcome talent that could help them. These opportunities can also be identified through other sources. For example, news about products and expansion plans often comes up at trade shows before being mentioned in the press. Construction bids and financing can serve as another type of early warning system as well.

In Conclusion

As you go through your job search, constantly question everything you see and hear by asking, "Is there an opportunity here for me?" You will be surprised at the number of opportunities, which have been passing you by each day. There are literally hundreds of things that enterprising people have done to expand their useful contacts. The few examples cited here should serve to stimulate your thinking about the things you can do and the kinds of people who can help you to increase your network and find a job.

SAMPLE NETWORKING APPROACH

Explain Your Situation:

Sam: "Hi, Bill, how are you today?"

Bill: "Fine, Sam. How about you?"

Sam: "I'm fine. Say, have you heard about what's happening over at Martex, where I work?"

Bill: "Well, I read in the Chronicle where Martex has been bought out by a big Atlanta outfit named JCL. Has anything else happened?"

Sam: "Well, this JCL outfit made a big announcement today. They're going to modernize the factory here with new equipment, and that means that 50 jobs, including mine, will be eliminated."

State Your Job Objective:

Bill: "Wow, that's tough. What do you plan to do?"

Sam: "Well, I knew it was coming for a while because a lot of rumors have been flying around. So after the initial shock, I began to realize that it was an opportunity. I'd like to find another job in manufacturing where I can use my ability to inspect products and train other people."

Bill: "It's really good that you've got such a positive attitude."

Explain How Your Contact Can Help You:

Sam: "I've also realized that it's been over ten years since I looked for a job. Job search techniques have probably changed a lot. I could really use some advice on what to do and how to do it, and maybe some inside information on what jobs are out there."

Ask For Referrals:

- Sam: "You wouldn't happen to know anyone who works in another plant around here that I could talk to, just to ask some questions?"
- Bill: "Well, yes, I do. My cousin works over at the Garber Plant in the Production Planning Department. Maybe he could talk with you."
- Sam: "That's great! Can you give me his last name and his job title, so I can get in touch with him there?"
- Bill: "Sure, his name is Ted Banks, and he's a Production Planning Supervisor. When you call, tell him you're a friend of mine, and then he will see you. In fact, our family is having a reunion this weekend. If I see him there, I'll tell him you're going to call."
- Sam: "Say, I really appreciate all of this, Bill. You have helped me out a lot! I'm glad I called you. Enjoy your family reunion this weekend!"

SAMPLE OF A NETWORKING "CHASE LETTER"

Mrs. Carmody 1, Networker 0

The Mrs. Carmodys of the business world will often succeed in screening you away from their bosses. Instead of agreeing to set a time for you to call back, they will insist, "I'll have Mr. Wellington return your call" or (worse) "I'll give Mr. Wellington your number."

If you don't hear from Mr. Wellington in a couple of days, you can try a follow-up call or two, but don't keep hammering with call after call. Over persistence can be a major turn-off. After a couple of follow-up calls, try a brief letter that explains who you are and what you want.

Source: National Business Employment Weekly Networking by Douglas Richardson