

Subj: Fw: A Networker's Guide to Feeling Better About the Approach  
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From:  
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For tonight's reference table.  
Regards,  
Steve

----- Original Message -----

From:  
To:  
Sent: Monday, September 09, 2002 12:55 PM  
Subject: A Networker's Guide to Feeling Better About the Approach

*Do Your Friends A Favor And Pass This Along!*

## A Networker's Guide to Feeling Better About the Approach

by Ellis Chase

Networking. Networking. Networking. And more networking. The word has been so overused that it can now have a negative, exploitative feel to it. It is also one of the most misunderstood terms in contemporary job-search technique, with the culprits often being career/outplacement consultants themselves. The word networking evokes unspoken yet common fears: "Why should anyone--least of all a stranger--want to see me?" or "I hate feeling beholden to people, or asking for favors." Despite all the negative associations, statistics still show overwhelming success with the use of networking techniques.

Instead of backing someone into a corner with an outright demand for help, leads or jobs, networking should be a courteous, subtle technique leading to the building of long-term relationships. Job seekers often fail to recognize that there can be as much reward for the networkee as there is for the networker because they view the process as a one-way proposition rather than seeing that it can benefit both parties. The following is a list of possible reasons why a contact would want to see the job seeker:

- Any person who is attuned to the vagaries of a changing work world is aware of the value of knowing people at all levels, and in related areas. Some people being approached, however, have been insulated in one area for a protracted period. Clearly, the more people they know and the more settings with which they're familiar, the better the options for future moves, knowledge, and even business. Therefore, there is a great deal to be gained by the contact for his or her own career development.
- Job seekers are always a source of competitive information about other players in their field. While the networker must be discreet, giving out a little bit of news can not only demonstrate sophistication in the field, but corroborate beliefs previously held by the networkee, which is reassuring.
- Gossip. This is great for entertainment value and relationship-building--who's moved where, who's left

where, who got a promotion. Job seekers are great sources of tidbits, because they have been "getting around" probably far more than the person they've approached.

**There are actually people out there  
who do enjoy helping--just for the sake of helping.**

- This is the one that most people have trouble believing: There are actually people out there who do enjoy helping--just for the sake of helping. And for them, that is the reward. Perhaps they've been in a similar situation themselves, which makes them empathetic. Or they simply may be altruistic people.
- People who have landed a new position are, in my estimation, the most willing networking targets. These recent successes are usually eager to demonstrate their accomplishment--and share the wealth. They are definitely feeling good about themselves and may want to indulge in a little boasting. And their contacts are still "warm," which is a help to you.
- Always implicit in a networking interaction is the idea of returning the favor. Job seekers should do even better than that. In thank you letters, it is good to include a statement like "If I can ever return the favor (or kindness, or assistance, or help), please do not hesitate to call on me." Being thanked makes the networkee feel good and also demonstrates that the campaigner was not merely using the situation to get ahead. Remember, the key to the whole deal is relationship-building.
- Most people these days are planning their next moves, as they should be. A job seeker can be an observer of current practices as well as future trends. This is one of the most significant ways that the job seeker can be of value to his or her contact.
- There is an off chance that a position might be available in the networkee's organization, or that he or she might know of an opening elsewhere. Either way, there is something to be gained by the contact. If the opening is in his or her area, then the benefit is obvious. If the opening is elsewhere, the referring person could end up the hero. But this happy outcome should not be depended upon, or the general emphasis of networking will be lost.
- In an article for The National Business Employment Weekly in 1989, I pointed out that from the point of view of the hiring manager, networking can be a financial windfall. Networking costs prospective employers nothing, especially when compared with recruiters (exorbitantly expensive) and advertising. Networkers should think of themselves as cost-saving for prospective employers, when they find themselves in those situations which change from networking into interviewing.
- Don't forget ego. People love being asked for advice; this is one of the cornerstones of the networking technique. It is flattering for the networkee to be placed on a pedestal, bestowing the benefits of his or her accumulated wisdom and experience (otherwise known as the "almighty guru" approach).

**The job-search process is a professional interaction,  
not a desperate plea for help.**

Someone who is conducting a job search is obviously susceptible to all sorts of mood swings, self-doubt, and disappointments. However, the campaigner does not have to be put in a vulnerable position that most assume is necessary. It is imperative to think of the job-search process as a professional interaction, not a desperate plea for help. Constructive networking should be an exchange of ideas--with career-growth potential for everyone involved.