

Networking Tips

Networking is about building relationships and can be a way to tap the hidden job market. There are a variety of job search strategies, but networking results in an average of 60% to 80% of all job offers. Networking is not about other people finding a job for you. Rather it is about you increasing your opportunities of finding a position.

Preparation

Know What You Want and Your Interests:

- Can you clearly state your career goals and the type of position you are seeking?
- Can you list five job skills and abilities that you do well?
- Do you know what is important to you in a working environment?
- Are you aware of your geographical preferences and limitations?

Manage your Anxiety:

Some people are naturally outgoing and enjoy networking, whereas others view it as an overwhelming process. Do not let lack of confidence or fear of rejection stop you from building your network. Utilize Career Services for practice and tips on how to manage anxiety while networking.

Build a List of Contacts:

It is important to have a starting point, especially if you are nervous. Start small by networking with people you already know. Your network can be made up of a variety of different people including friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, supervisors, community organization members, professional organization contacts, school peers, LinkedIn contacts, etc.

Know Where to Go:

- **Formal Networking Events:** Seek out specific events that are designed to facilitate the networking process. Examples include career fairs, industry networking events, campus recruitment events, and conferences.
- **Organizations:** Join groups or professional associations in your field of interest. Utilize LinkedIn in your search.
- **Direct Approaches:** You can also approach contacts through email, phone, or LinkedIn to set up a time to chat.

Engaging with Your Network

General Guidance:

During an initial contact, do not ask for a job. Simply ask for information about where positions may exist and ask questions that get people talking about jobs and careers. When explaining your future goals and current situation (in positive terms), ask for suggestions or referrals. When attending a networking event with someone experienced, ask for introductions.

Remember the Basics:

- Be yourself! Be authentic and engaging rather than artificial.

- Stay aware of your “non-verbals.” Smile and try not to be so focused and anxious that you frown or scowl.
- Ask a question about the other person as an easy way to engage and start the conversation.

Maintain Relationships:

After formally meeting with a contact, send a thank you letter expressing your appreciation for their suggestions. Let your contact know that you plan to take action on their suggestions and keep them informed about the leads that you are getting from the information they provided. You should maintain professional contact with your network even after you get a job. This network can help you with career development throughout your life!

Stay Open:

The person you meet at a wedding or on a plane may turn out to be an excellent contact or know the right person to introduce you to.