

Many people use job listings as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10-20% of jobs are ever published—that means that 80-90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

Nine Keys to Networking



Be Prepared.

First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking. Remember, your **purpose in networking is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads**. Some of the many benefits of networking include increased visibility within your field, propelling your professional development, finding suitable mentors, increasing your chances of promotion and perhaps finding your next job. Second, know yourself—your education, experience and skills. Practice a concise, one-minute presentation of yourself so that people will know the kinds of areas in which you are interested. Your networking meeting should include the following elements: introduction, self-overview, Q&A, obtaining referrals and closing.



Be Targeted.

Identify your network, “I don’t have a network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. List potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.



Be Professional.

Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.

What is a network?

A network is an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings. These individuals can provide you with career information and advice. Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don’t give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and about their jobs, and are willing to give realistic (and free) advice.



Be LinkedIn.

Use social media to enhance your online presence. An effective LinkedIn profile and professional photo is an essential aspect of your job search. It should even be updated and kept current as you progress along your career path. LinkedIn reaches far beyond a simple job board and is a powerful networking tool.



Be Patient.

Heena Noorani, research analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, “Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening: You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to payoff.”



Be Focused (quality, not quantity).

In a large group setting, circulate and meet people, but don’t try to talk to everyone. It’s better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions. Don’t cling to people you already know; you’re unlikely to build new contacts that way. If you are at a reception, be sure to wear a nametag and collect or exchange business cards so you can later contact the people you meet.



Be Referral-Centered.

The person you are networking with may not have a job opening, but he or she may know someone who is hiring. The key is to exchange information and then expand your network by obtaining additional referrals each time you meet someone new. Be sure to mention the person who referred you.



Be Proactive.

Stay organized. Update your contacts frequently and send thank-you notes. Ask if you can follow-up the conversation with a phone call, or with a more in-depth meeting in the near future.



Be Dedicated.

Most importantly, networking should be ongoing. You will want to stay in touch with contacts over the long haul—not just when you need something. Make networking part of your long-term career plan.

Questions to Ask During Networking

- ▶ *What do you like most (least) about your work?*
- ▶ *Can you describe a typical workday or week?*
- ▶ *What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?*
- ▶ *What are the future career opportunities in this field?*
- ▶ *What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?*
- ▶ *Why do people enter/leave this field or company?*
- ▶ *Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?*
- ▶ *What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?*
- ▶ *With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?*

Do This, Not That!

Do keep one hand free from your briefcase or purse so that you can shake hands when necessary.

Don't tell them your life story; you are dealing with busy people so get right to the point.

Do wear your nametag on your right side.

Don't be shy or afraid to ask for what you need.

Do bring copies of your resume.

Don't pass up opportunities to network.

Prepare and Practice Your Self-Introduction

To avoid being tongue-tied when you try to start a conversation with someone you don't know, prepare a self-introduction that is clear, interesting, and well delivered. What you say about yourself will depend on the nature of the event, but in any case, it shouldn't take longer than 8-10 seconds. Although practicing your introduction might at first seem silly and artificial, it will eventually help you make an introduction that sounds natural, confident, and smooth. Here are a few examples:

At an Employer Information Session:

"Hi, my name is Sally Smith. I'm glad to have this chance to meet you and learn how a psychology major can break into the pharmaceutical industry."

At a Career Fair:

"Good morning, I'm Julie Jones, a former summer intern at your Los Angeles branch."

At a Career Speed Dating Event:

"Hello, my name is Jessica Garcia. I'm a junior business major looking to find out what it's like working in public relations and market."