



Networking

What is Networking?

Networking is the process of building relationships with others in order to gain information you are seeking, as well as to offer information that you have to share.

Why Network?

Approximately 80% of jobs are obtained through networking. In addition, by practicing networking you can gain valuable information about...

- Industry trends
- Professional development organizations or events
- Opportunities for collaboration

How Do I Network? Six Steps to Success...

Step 1: Create a contact list

Creating a list of people to network with can be a helpful tool. Begin writing this list by thinking about both professional and community contacts that you already know.

Professional contacts may include:

- Co-workers past and present
- Managers past and present
- Professionals in your field
- Members of alumni associations you belong to
- Other job seekers

Community contacts may include:

- Family
- Friends
- Service industry acquaintances (hairstylist, dentist, etc.)
- Members of religious or cultural organizations you belong to
- Members of activity groups you belong to (book clubs, athletic teams)

Step 2: Get organized

Staying organized is key when it comes to networking. Get organized by using the following tips:

- Create an account and profile on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com).
- Create an email account dedicated solely to your networking endeavors.
- Create a separate file folder on your computer to store networking related information.
- Store your business cards in a specific place in your wallet or purse. If you do not have a business card you can make your own. Check out www.staples.com for more information.

Step 3: Prepare your wardrobe

Make sure that you have the appropriate clothing for the networking event you are attending. If the event is professional you should wear business or business casual attire. If it is in the community make sure your outfit is clean and coordinated.

Step 4: Do your research

You will be a more effective networker if you research the company or person that you are planning on networking with before you contact them. For example, if you are attending a job fair and are interested in networking with employers, research the companies that will be in attendance so that you can ask more educated questions when you attend the event.

Step 5: Prepare a thirty second commercial

A thirty second commercial is a quick blurb describing your background and needs. Depending on your specific circumstances, you usually want to address the following questions in your commercial:

- What is your educational/employment background?
- What type of position or information are you currently seeking?

Sample Thirty Second Commercial:

“For the past five years I have been working as a graphic designer with a small marketing firm in Boston. My current company is closing and I am seeking a new position where I will be able to use my creativity and strong technical background in a large company in the Boston area.”

Step 6: Practice networking conversations

You will need to tailor your networking conversation to your specific circumstances however the following format can be used as a general guideline:

- **Introduction**
This will usually involve you telling the person your name if you have not previously met them and giving them a firm handshake.
- **Asking questions**
A good way to get a conversation going is to ask the person some open-ended questions. For example, if it is someone you are meeting for the first time in a professional setting you may ask them “What does your position entail at XYZ Company?” or “How did you get involved with the XYZ Professional Organization?” If the person is someone that you already know out in the community you might say “How is work going for you?” or “Are you working on any interesting projects right now?”
- **Listening skills**
Listening is one of the most important components of networking. Listening carefully to what the other person says not only shows that you care about what they have to say, but it also helps you to gather information so that you know how to best tailor your message to the other person, or to identify information that they may be able to provide for you.
- **Offer help if possible/appropriate**
If the person that you are speaking with identifies a need, for example, if they are looking for a job, or if they would like to learn more about a specific industry, offer help if it is possible and appropriate. If you help others, they will be likely to help you in return, and it can be rewarding to provide assistance to others.
- **Thirty second commercial**
If it is appropriate, ask for assistance from the other person by tailoring your thirty second commercial to the conversation.

Sample Networking Conversation:

Mary: Hi my name is Mary Smith, nice to meet you.

Joe: Hi Mary, I'm Joe Brown.

Mary: So Joe, what company do you work for?

Joe: I'm with Franklin Corporation.

Mary: Oh, I've heard a lot of good things about Franklin, how do you like working there?

Joe: I like it a lot, I've been a Senior Financial Analyst there for almost ten years now; it is hard to believe.

Mary: Wow that is great! What would you say makes Franklin such a great place to work?

Joe: Well, the benefits are great and over all I really like everyone on the team.

Mary: I think it is so important to have good relationships with your co-workers. I am job searching right now and I hope that I can find the same type of environment to work in.

Joe: Most definitely. What kind of position are you looking for?

Mary: Well, I graduated from Endicott College with a B.S. in Accounting in May and I am hoping to get a position doing accounting work on the auditing side with a firm in the Boston area.

Joe: Let me give you my card. I don't know if we have any openings available right now, but if you see anything definitely get in touch and I will see if I can help you out.

Mary: Thanks so much! Here is my card as well.

Making Your Networks Last

Networking can be very time consuming and can take a lot of hard work. Make sure your efforts pay off by keeping in touch with your contacts. If possible, connect with your networking contacts on LinkedIn. There is no set rule in terms of how to best keep in touch however, sending holiday cards and writing periodic check-in emails a couple of times during the year are good strategies, as well as sending periodic messages via LinkedIn. Also, make sure to update your contact's information regularly to ensure accuracy of your contact list.

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