NETWORKING

Networking is a way of contacting, meeting and talking to people in the fields where you would like to work. It is a process of actively fostering connections and creating ways to disseminate information. Networking is *not* job-hunting, however. This might sound strange since it is a great way to help you find employment. Most people like to help others, but can be very put off if a stranger asks them for a job. The key is to network and build a relationship with them so you become someone they know and trust!

Building professional relationships is so important because approximately 80% of job openings are never advertised, leaving the only way to learn about them being through word of mouth or networking – this is known as the "hidden job market". Studies continue to confirm that the majority of jobs are obtained through some kind of networking. The Wall Street Journal (*WSJ*) at one time reported that 94% of successful job seekers claimed that networking had made all the difference for them. Job search studies over the last 20 years have also indicated that about 85% of people have found their jobs through networking.

Businesses also prefer to hire someone they know. Most of the time, Human Resource personnel hire individuals that come recommended from their own employees (known as "inside referrals"). Companies view this method more favorably because they aren't just getting a resume with educational and experience requisites. They are receiving first-hand information from a trusted employee about the characteristics and qualities of a candidate. Moreover, the referred network candidate will already know something about the organization and have a personal connection to it. This is why it is imperative to network!

BEFORE YOUR BEGIN NETWORKING

1. **Learn the job search basics –** Get a handle on the job search strategies you will be utilizing; one of those being networking. It is important to diversify your strategies when looking for employment tapping into both the advertised and hidden job markets.
2. **Conduct self-assessment** – Take some time to honestly assess your personal strengths and weaknesses, along with your career goals and interests. You will then come across to your networking contacts as more focused and the conversation will thus be more productive.
3. **Decide on a target market** – What type of career paths, companies and industries are you interested in, and what geographic preferences do you have?
4. **Prepare a resume** – This document will obviously be used when searching for employment, but will also be a helpful tool when networking to help your contacts get a better idea of your skills and background.
5. **Get organized** – Decide how you are going to organize your list of contacts. We recommend doing so through a spreadsheet where you can record names, titles, company names, addresses, phones and fax numbers, email addresses and dates of communication.
6. **Set goals** – You should have two main goals when networking: gaining greater visibility with people in your field of interest or at a place you would like to ultimately work, and obtaining more information from people about those things.

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

1. **Information** – Gain greater knowledge of your career/field of interest, including current and emerging trends.
2. **Insight** – Gain information that will lead you to the hidden job market. Learn of unpublished job opportunities, and be referred to an opportunity you didn't know about.
3. **First Chance** - Jobs posted on the internet or in the newspaper have often been filled or are close to being filled by the time you become aware of them. Networking gives you an earlier chance at an opportunity.
4. **Less Competition** – If the job is not advertised, then less people will know about the position, leaving you with a greater chance at an offer.
5. **Access** – Networking gives you access to people (particularly HR folks) who might not respond you otherwise.
6. **Recommendation** – Networking provides you with the added advantage of a recommendation from someone the hiring manager knows.
7. **Interview Advantage** - Learn about the problems and needs in the organization, and be more prepared in an interview to offer positive solutions to those needs.
8. **Increase Network Base** - Ask about other contacts to increase your network base so you have greater search reach.

PROSPECTIVE NETWORK CONTACTS/RESOURCES

1. Your college alumni (Alumni Directory and GCC Alumni Group on LinkedIn)
2. Career Services Office
3. Family, friends, neighbors
4. Your friends' parents, and their family
5. Professors, advisors, coaches and tutors
6. Church friends and clergy
7. Members of clubs, religious groups and other organizations.
8. Your former bosses and your friends' and family members' bosses
9. Professional affiliations and trade organization members
10. **LinkedIn and other social media platforms*

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites like LinkedIn and Twitter, are increasingly being used by individuals today to assist with their job search and to build their network of contacts. How you use these tools is important. You want to make sure you're representing yourself well and professionally online. "Your Google results are your new resume", according to Dick Bolles. One study showed that as high as 90% of recruiters Google their candidates, and 26% eliminated candidates based upon their online findings (ExecuNet). Thus, be aware of your "e-footprint". If used responsibly, though, these tools have the capability to significantly help you in your job search by identifying opportunities and developing your connections.

What is LinkedIn?

According to the LinkedIn Learning Center, "LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with over 175 million members and growing rapidly. LinkedIn connects you to your trusted contacts and helps you exchange knowledge, ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals." It is important for students to build an online presence through this platform and begin making connections with people through affinity groups, as well as their own individual contacts.

To learn more about LinkedIn and for step-by-step video tutorials, check out the "Social Media" link within the "Career Advice & Preparation" section of our website (www.gcc.edu/cso).

HOW TO NETWORK

Friends/Comfortable Contacts

Develop an initial contact list of people that you feel comfortable calling on the phone or emailing. During your phone conversation, explain that you are currently in an active job search pursuing full time employment in a certain industry or profession. Ask them if they have advice to offer you and contacts to suggest you reach out to, and then follow-up with an email (or handwritten letter) and resume.

Letter to a Friend/Comfortable Contact:

Dear_____:

It was great talking to you yesterday. I enjoyed catching up on what's been happening in your career.

As I mentioned to you, I am conducting an active job search, and I'm trying to reach out to various contacts in my field of interest in order to develop my network.

I'm enclosing my resume to provide you with information about my background, experiences and skills, plus a list of some organizations I'm greatly interested in pursuing. I would be appreciative if you wouldn't mind reviewing these organizations to see if you knew anyone at any of these places, or knew of others who might know anyone in these companies. Additionally, if there are similar companies you are familiar with and have contacts at, I would really appreciate you passing along their names and contact information to me, if possible.

Per our telephone conversation, I am looking forward to speaking with you again at 6:00 PM on Thursday evening to discuss my networking strategies. I will only take a few minutes of your time, however, as I'm sure you are very busy.

Thank you and I look forward to our next conversation.

Sincerely,

_____

When working with friends or friends of friends, make sure you do not ask them to contact the referral for you (although, they may offer to do so on your behalf). They should not be conducting your job search. Remember also that you are not asking for a job, but only for contacts, ideas and advice.

Alumni

Grove City College Alumni can be a great benefit to you! Through alumni networking events or the Alumni Directory (found under "Alumni & Friends" on the College's website), contact alumni in the field, company or geographic region that you have decided upon. In a professional manner, briefly introduce yourself, explain how you got their information (through the Alumni Directory) and ask for career advice and contact leads. Consider setting up a phone or personal meeting with them. During your meeting, here are some questions you can ask alumni:

- What is your current functional area of responsibility?
- What has your career path been up until now and where do you anticipate it going in the future? Are there related opportunities and/or developing areas that I should know about? Trends? What's new? What is needed or wanted in your field?
- How is your degree helping you in your current position? What other careers are similar to yours?
- Did you have previous work experience in another industry? Has it helped you on your present assignment?
- What are basic requirements for careers in this industry? What kinds of prior experience are most essential?
- What type of training did you receive and for what length of time? What skills are most important for this career?
- What do you like and dislike about your present job, work environment, company and industry?
- In the position you hold now, what do you do on a typical day?
- What specific advice would you give to students entering this field? What about internships or volunteer experience?
- Can you suggest any contacts that I should talk to? May I tell this new contact that you referred him/her to me?

Following Up with New Contacts Received

Begin to set-up and conduct informational interviews. Send emails/letters out to your contacts, but **do not** include your resume.

Email/letter to an initial contact:

Dear _____:

Mr. (Name), a mutual acquaintance (or friend) of ours, suggested that I write to you in regard to my interest in <u>finance</u>. He thought you would be a good person to offer me some advice.

I am interested in pursuing a career as a financial analyst. My knowledge of finance is a result of my rigorous academic preparation at Grove City College, and my two internships at _____. I will be graduating in May and would like to begin exploring the possibilities that are available in the area of finance.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person if your schedule allows it. I am certain that your advice and counsel would be most helpful as I begin to gather information and advice for my job search. I will call your office next week to see if and when you would be available to meet with me.

Best Regards,

Telephone Communication:

Hello Mr. _____, my name is _____and I've been referred to you by a mutual friend, _____, who said that you would be helpful to me. Do you have a few minutes right now to talk? (yes) Thank you for your time. Did you receive my email/letter? Good. Then you know I am currently at a pivotal point in my life right now regarding my career. I am developing a few strategies and would like your advice and feedback. Do you have 30 minutes next week when you can meet with me?

Thank You Email/Letter:

Dear_____:

Mr. _____ was right when he said that you would be helpful in giving me advice and counsel regarding my career.

I really appreciated you taking the time from your busy schedule to meet with me. Your advice was most helpful.

Again, thanks so much for your assistance. As we discussed, I will connect with you again and provide you with an update within the next 2-3 weeks as to how I made out with the following suggestions you gave to me:

List of suggestions, companies, people etc..

Thanks Again,

Learn from Every Network Encounter:

1. What it is **really like** to work in a given field or organization now. They can also tell you how the field has changed and what they see for the future.
2. The needed **aptitude and training** level to get into a particular field.
3. The **"insider" information** on an organization such as who is in charge, what the culture is like, and what it takes to succeed in a certain position.

4. The **true nature** of the job. The contact can be a living demonstration of what it is really like to work in a given field. Can you imagine yourself doing what they do?
5. Every once in a while, the person with whom you are having an informational interview will **offer to help** move your application along. When that happens, it can be a great advantage to you. But whether that offer occurs or not, the information you have received will be essential in helping you sort out your options and present yourself more effectively!

Conclusion

Remember, the name of the game in networking is *regular and consistent follow-up.* It is not enough to just meet someone and conduct a 15-minute informational interview. Also having an "in" usually isn't enough to land a job. Understand that networking is all about information. Never turn to your network to ask for a job. Instead, approach your contacts for advice and information that can help in your career planning. Networking itself will never get you the job. It is the information gathered from networking that provides direction on where to take action.

Logue, C.H. (1993). *Outplace yourself: Secrets of an executive outplacement counselor.* Holbrook: Bob Adams Inc.