Networking Tips

Compiled by Career and Counseling Services, University of Houston - Clear Lake

Networking is about building relationships, and is considered the most effective way to tap the hidden job market. There are a variety of job search strategies; however, networking results in an average of 60% to 80% of all job offers. There are formal and informal methods in networking, but a very important fact to remember is that you are promoting yourself. Networking does not mean you are finding other people to find a job for you, but that you are increasing your opportunities of finding a position.

PREPARATION
Know what you want: Before you begin networking, conduct a self-check to be sure of what you are seeking.
- Know your interests. Can you clearly state your career goals? 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?
- Have you researched salary ranges and determined the salary range you will consider?

List of Contacts: Write down the names of people you know: friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, supervisors, people you have met through your participation in community organizations, professional organizations, school, etc. Your list should include all types of people. Your objective is to develop a list as long as possible. At this point, do not worry about how you are going to contact these individuals, simply make the list.

Organizing List of Contacts: Review your list and determine who you should contact first. Decide whom to contact based on your career field. If you have a specific location in which you are looking for a position, contact individuals in that area or individuals whom may have contacts in that area. If you are not very comfortable with networking, start with those individuals that you feel most comfortable contacting. It is important to have a starting point.

Formal Approaches:
- Career Fairs
- Professional organizations
- Campus recruitment events

Direct Marketing:
- Cold call
- Letter & Electronic Resources (e-mail)

MAKING CONTACT
After you have determined whom to contact first, there are several ways you can contact them. During these initial contacts, do not ask for a job, but simply ask for information about where positions may exist. Ask questions that get people talking about jobs and careers. Listen and take notes. Wait until your contact asks about you, then explain your situation in positive terms. Ask for suggestions or referrals.

Effective Networking Questions:
- How does my resume look?
- Do you have any advice or ideas for me?
- Are there any groups or professional organizations that I could become involved with?
- Are there any publications that I should read?
- How would you approach this job search?
- Who would you consider speaking to?

Maintaining the Relationship: Send a thank you letter to everyone who has assisted you, even if it is someone you know well. Let your contact know that you appreciate and value their suggestions and plan to take action on them. Keep your contact informed about the leads that you are getting from the information that they provided for you. You should maintain professional contact with your network even after you get a job. Your network can help you with career development throughout your life.

Remember the Basics: Don’t be pushy or demand others to help. Do your research, don’t expect others to teach you what you can research yourself. When someone offers their assistance, offer something in return: a favor, an article, or the name of a contact.

OVER
Networking and Researching Resources

The following list is only a small sample of what is available to identify contacts or educate yourself in preparation for your job search. Find articles in trade journals relevant to the industries you will be networking in and amaze colleagues in your profession with your sophisticated level of knowledge. Identify professional organizations and seek out their local chapter offices and members. People will want to talk to you about your mutual interests in a profession or industry.

OVERALL GUIDE
- Guide to American Directories (B Klein Publications) Over 6,000 directories listed in 300 major categories

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
- Encyclopedia of Associations (Gale Research Co.) Over 20,000 associations listed by category and cross referenced by location
- National Trade and Professional Associations (Columbia Books, Inc.) Over 6,000 entries
- Business Organizations, Agencies & Publications Directory (Gale Research Co.) List name, address and contact person for over 20,000 organizations and publications
- Directory of Industry Data Sources (Harper & Row) Covers special issue publications / articles for 65 industries
- Consultants and Consulting Organizations Directory Over 10,000 firms listed by industry, function and location

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
- International Houston (Greater Houston Partnership) Available in the career center. Identifies the Houston players in international business
- Directory of Jobs and Careers Abroad Mostly a “how to” book, but has a listing of contacts from around the world
- Directory of Executive Recruiters (Kennedy & Kennedy) Over 2,000 listed by function, industry and location
- Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries (World Trade Academic Press) Over 3,000 entries including contact names

MANAGERS, RECRUITERS, & CONSULTANTS
- Dunn & Bradstreet’s Principle International Business Over 50,000 companies, their products and location
- Dunn & Bradstreet Reference Book of Corporate Managements Contains biographies
- Standard & Poor’s Register of Corporations, Directories and Executives Contains biographies of over 70,000 corporate officials and includes an obituary section

FACT FINDING
- Book of Lists (Houston Business Journal) Available in the career center. Identifies the major players in the Houston employment market by industry
- The Business Reference Desk of the Houston Public Library can help you with job search research as long as you have specific information you need
- Financial, marketing and public relations publications put out by a particular company you are targeting
- Business Periodicals Index, Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature and other library database software that identifies articles on companies, industries and professional issues:
  - ABI / Inform – covers 800 periodicals for last 5 years, gives citations and abstracts
  - Business Dateline – Full text articles from regional journals and newspapers. It is more likely to give information on small and medium size companies
  - Compact Disclosure – Full text of recent corporate annual reports
  - F&S Index Plus Text – Articles from over 1,000 sources

Revised 10/09