CAREER NETWORKING

The importance of career networking shouldn't be discounted when you are in the midst of a job search. In fact, career networking should become a part of your daily work and career-related endeavors. Your career network should be in place for when you need it, both for job searching and for moving along the career ladder. Since you never know when you might need it, it makes sense to have an active career network, even if you don't need it today.

Career Networking Tips

What Your Career Network Can Do For You
Over 80% of job seekers say that their network has helped with their job search. Networking contacts can help with more than job leads. They can provide referrals to or insider information about companies you might be interested in working for. They can provide information on career fields you might want to explore or what the job market is like on the other side of the country. Your network can give you advice on where to look for jobs or review your resume. The possibilities are endless.

Who to Include in Your Career Network
Your career network should include anyone who can assist you with a job search or career move. It can include past and present co-workers, bosses, friends with similar interests, colleagues from business associations, alumni from your university, or acquaintances you have met via online networking services. Your network can also include family, neighbors, and anyone who might have a connection that will help.

When networking with people you don't know, make sure that you know what you want. Are you looking for company information? Do you want to know about job opportunities? Be specific in what you ask for.

Informal Job Search Networking

Try job search networking, it really does work. At least 60% - some report even higher statistics - of all jobs are found by networking. Develop contacts - friends, family, neighbors, college alumni, people in associations - anyone who might help generate information and job leads. You can take a direct approach and ask for job leads or try a less formal approach and ask for information and advice. Contact everyone you know. You may be surprised by the people they know. Make yourself pick up the phone and call. It helps to assign you a quota of calls to be made each day. The more phone calls you make the easier it will become.

Email is a perfectly acceptable way to network as well. Keep your message brief and to the point and be sure to check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

If you are attending a holiday gathering or any other type of party, it is appropriate to mention in casual conversation that you are seeking employment. Accept all the invitations you receive - you never know where or when you might meet someone who can provide job search assistance! My stepson was not only offered a co-op position by one of my friends that he met at a birthday party at our house, he was also remembered a year later when the company was hiring.

Formal Job Search Networking

Formal networking works too - try going to a business social or an association meeting or event. You'll find that many of the participants have the same goals you do and will be glad to exchange
business cards. If you're shy, volunteer to work at the registration table where you can greet people as they come in or bring a friend to walk around the room with you - there's security in numbers.

As well as networking the old fashioned way, use the internet to network. Do you belong to email listservs or discussion groups? If so, use them. Visit discussion boards like the Job Search Forum to network with career professionals and other job seekers. Use Vault's message boards or visit one of the other sites that focus on online job search and career networking. If you belong to a professional association visit its web site for career assistance. Are you a college alumnus? Contact the Career Services office at your alma mater - many universities have online career networks where you can find alumni who will be thrilled to help you with your job search.

Career Networking Works!
As you can see, career networking really does work and it’s important to have a viable network in place throughout your career and to use your network to your advantage when job searching or exploring career options.

Job Search Networking Tips

- Conduct informational interviews with your contacts and ask for referrals for additional meetings
- Follow through with referrals, and always thank contacts in writing (email is fine)
- Create an inventory of your accomplishments, including your educational background and work history, to keep at hand should a chance encounter become a contact
- Make a list of the assets you will bring as a prospective employee
- Bring business cards and a pen
- Write some notes so you'll remember the details on who you have just met on the business cards you collect or in a notebook (Buy Direct)
- When networking online, keep track of who you've emailed and where you have posted so you can follow up
- Finally, if you haven't memorized all your strengths and strong points write them down - you'll need to articulate these in your resumes and cover letters well as emphasize them during interviews.

Career Networking Examples
Here are few examples of how career networking can help:

- Susan noticed a help-wanted ad for a job at a local veterinary clinic. She called a friend who happened to use that vet. Her friend called the vet and recommended Susan. Susan got an interview and got the job. The vet was glad to hire someone who came highly recommended by a good client.
- John was interested in pursuing a career in medicine. He mentioned his interest to a family friend who happened to be a doctor. The doctor arranged for John to spend a day shadowing him at the hospital and provided an excellent recommendation for medical school.
- Angela was interested in changing careers and moving from public relations to publishing. Even though she graduated more than a few years ago, she tapped her college career network and came up with a contact at a top New York publishing firm. In addition to being sent new job postings, her resume was hand-delivered to Human Resources when she found a position she wanted to apply for.
- In casual conversation at the orthodontist’s office, Jeannie, the assistant, just happened to mention to a patient's mom that she was interested in horses and in a part-time job working with them. The mom had horses and a bunch of contacts. Jeannie had a part-time job working on a local horse farm by the end of the week!