

Networking: Do you know how to work your net?

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What is networking?

Networking is the process of identifying the people that you know and the people that those people know. It is the process of interacting with individuals who have interests similar to yours, who are willing to share information about those common interests, or provide the names of others with similar interests.

Though it sounds simple, most people aren't comfortable with approaching people, particularly those they don't know, for things they might need.

How do I start?

To get started, all you need is something you can write names on. Written lists of your networking contacts are the most important elements of effective networking. You will mainly work with two lists, a core/primary contact list and an expanded contact list.

Your primary list consists of people you see often and with whom you have frequent contact: your immediate family, classmates, coworkers, etc. The extended list is a list of people you know casually: friends of friends and family, former classmates and coworkers, professionals with whom you do business (dentists, grocers). It pays to go through this list at least 3 times to think of contacts you might not have considered previously.

All of this preparation can be overwhelming, but organization is three-fourths of the work of getting the job you want!

You Have your Net, Now Work it!

Once your network is established, you need to talk to as many people as possible about your situation and what you are looking for. Do this as soon as possible! Mail campaigns may be the most comfortable form of contact for job candidates, but it is far less effective than network calling.

By speaking with each contact on the phone, you can focus your conversation on areas where the networking contact is likely to contribute most significantly to your job search.

Before picking up the phone you need to plan each and every one of your networking calls prior to calling. It helps to have a basic sales pitch, 30-45 seconds long, that succinctly describes to people who you are, what you are looking for, and how they can be of help to you.

Managing and Working Your Net.

Talk with your primary con-

tacts on a regular basis and keep them updated on developments in your job search. For your extended contacts, send copies of interesting articles or other information with a brief note; write notes specifically mentioning something of interest you discussed. Going beyond the formal thank you card, your contacts will be flattered by your thoughtfulness and impressed with your attention to details.

You've Got the Job, Now What?

Networking is not just as a job-hunting tool, but it also a means of gathering useful information, building a pool of professional contacts, and positioning yourself for new opportunities in the long term. It pays to conduct a well-planned, carefully thought-out networking strategy. Done correctly, your net will work for you both personally and professionally throughout your career and beyond.



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