



## *Networking*

### *Who is in Your Network?*

Parents, parents' friends, children, spouses, spouses' friends, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, former in-laws, friends, neighbors, professional colleagues, present and former co-workers, ex-college roommates, alumni former professors, Clergy, social acquaintances, people at your health club, local elected officials, your doctor, accountant, lawyer, dentist, banker, barber/hairdresser, dry cleaner, shoemaker, and many more.

Networking is the process of contacting people who can either give you information about potential job openings or introduce you to others who have this information. The ultimate goal of networking is to meet the person who has the authority to hire you for the job you want.

### *Why Networking?*

Most jobs are never advertised in the newspaper or listed with employment agencies. Research indicates that one of the most effective ways of finding out about jobs is by getting leads from people you know, that is, by networking.

Even if most of the people you meet through networking don't know of a job for you, talking to them about your job search can help you clarify your job goals and hone your interviewing skills. The people in your network can also give you emotional support, offer feedback on your resume and provide you with information about new careers or companies.

### *Who is in Your Network?*

Anyone you know who might have information about a job opening, or who knows someone who might have a lead about a job opening, is in your network.

Tell all of them that you're interested in exploring new job opportunities. Give them a brief review of your background. Be specific about what you're after. For example, say, "I'm looking for a job as a compensation analyst with a medium-sized firm," rather than "I work in human resources" or "Do you know of any jobs?"

Most people will be happy to help you if they can. If they don't know of any jobs at the moment,

ask them to keep you in mind. Most importantly, ask them if they know two or three other people you can contact. Then contact those people and so on.

Whenever you meet someone new, exchange business cards. Even if you're unemployed, have some cards printed; it is not very costly. Be sure to include your telephone number and profession. For example:

*Celia Smith*  
*System Analyst*  
*(313) 555-2222*

Let people know how much you appreciate their help by sending a thank you note or by letting them know the results of the information they gave you. Offer to help them in return.

### ***How Can You Expand Your Network?***

Become active in a professional or trade association. Their meetings or other events are good opportunities for you to network with people in your field.

Get involved with a civic, social or religious organization. As you meet new people in the organization, you can network with them and work on a worthwhile project at the same time.

**Follow-Up Networking Leads:** After your initial networking efforts and research, you will probably have a long list of new people to contact. The next step is to meet with them to introduce yourself and get more information or job leads. If you happen to encounter someone on your list, you might be able to set up a meeting for a later date. However, most meetings are arranged by phone or mail.

**Networking by Phone:** Most people you call will be happy to help you, but they may not have much time, so it's important to make your point directly and succinctly.

- Write out a script ahead of time, but try to memorize rather than read it. Calling someone you don't know can be extremely stressful. If you are uncomfortable doing this, practice with a friend and get feedback on your presentation. When you're well prepared, these calls will be easier than you anticipated. You have nothing to lose by calling--if you don't make the call, you'll never find out if there was good information or a job lead at the other end. If you do call, you may be successful. At the very worst you'll feel a bit uncomfortable. Each call you make will make the next call easier and will prepare you for the more daunting task of calling an employer to ask for a job interview.
- Use the sample below as a guide for making a networking phone call:

*"Hello, Mr. Wise, my name is Bill Wynn. Martha Pabon suggested I speak to you about a career change I'm considering. I was a financial analyst with Mammoth Bank for seven years. Since their merger, I've been exploring other options in finance and accounting.*

- I'd like to meet with you next week for about 20 to 30 minutes to get any advice you have to offer. Would Tuesday morning be convenient?"

**Networking by Mail:** If you have many people to contact or are seeking a job in a distant city or overseas, developing a networking letter may be a good idea. The letter should be on your personal letterhead and include your telephone number. Like your phone calls, your letter should be brief and to the point. It is not a good idea to enclose your resume at this time as you are not applying for a specific job opening. As with your phone calls, your mailing should be targeted, based on your networking and research, to those people or companies who would be most likely to have the jobs or the information you seek.

- Here is a sample of a networking letter written by someone who has not looked for a job in a long time and is seeking information about the employment outlook in his field. He has been referred by someone he has met by networking. A similar letter could also be sent without using a referral:

*Date*

*Ms. Marva Talent  
The Art Workshop  
1515 Willow Street  
Buffalo, NY 14299*

*Dear Ms. Talent:*

*Mark Painter of All Right Advertising suggested I contact you for advice about my career plans.*

*I have worked as a designer for eight years at the Darling Clothing Company, which is going out of business shortly. As I have not had to look for a job recently, I would appreciate any information you can give me about the employment outlook for designers in the Buffalo area.*

*Could we arrange a brief meeting in the near future? I will call you early next week to set up an appointment.*

*Sincerely,  
Raymond Best  
(716) 999-2222*

The most important part of your networking letter is follow-up. If you say you will call someone next Thursday, be sure to call!

## *How to Keep Track of Your Networking Efforts*

Keep a record of all the contacts you make, what the result was and any follow-up that is needed. This will help you organize your time and monitor your progress. Use the form as a guide. You may also want to keep a card file for each person or company contacted.

### **Informational Interviewing**

When you meet with the people you've contacted by phone or letter, you are going to interview them. The informational interview consists of talking with people to get information about their occupation, company or industry. It is not a job interview although it may lead to a job offer.

Informational interviewing is most useful if you are looking for your first job or want to change occupations. It is less stressful than a job interview and a good way to practice for them. However, if your only reason for visiting the company is to pursue a job lead, don't disguise your purpose by saying you want information. If you know the job you want and the companies that have these jobs skip informational interviews and try to arrange a job interview.

When interviewing for information try to speak to the person who would have the power to hire you if there were an opening, or to someone who is doing the kind of work that you think you'd like to perform.