



Networking....The Web to Your Future

Everyone says that networking is the way to find a new job, advance in your existing job, or land that dream job. Statistics show that the most desirable jobs never make it to the printing press or to the job board.

In a job market where that next job seems to be based more and more on relationships, rather than just skill level, networking is the critical to your successful job search. So how do you know when you are networking correctly?

To answer that question, let's first identify and explore some of the fundamentals to networking.

1. **Become focused** and know what you want when you are engaging someone.
2. **Prioritize** those companies and contacts that you know or want to know.
3. **Communicate** to everyone in your personal and professional circles (e.g. friends, family, former co-workers, favorite professors, and various peer groups) what you are looking for.
4. **Offer something** when you are networking...it is not just about receiving.

Become focused

Knowing what it is you want in any situation reduces busy work and allows you to create a concrete plan of action. When preparing to network for a new career or your existing career, your focus will determine your success. The first step in preparing this focus is to decide what it is you are looking for in terms of satisfaction and fulfillment. This is called "doing your homework." In today's market of overloaded schedules, knowing how and what you can offer will provide you with not only the confidence to seek out those who may be able to help, but also give you clear and simple talking points to share with those people with whom you network.

Being focused keeps you in the present. It does you no good to think about what is going to happen next year if you don't have a new job or gain that next client. Staying focused allows you to take control of your situation in the moment. When this is done, people feel a sense of reassurance and an ability to move forward. It is also felt by those with whom you are networking. People understand and remember contacts who are clear about what they want and what they can offer.

Prioritize

Organizing the people and companies with whom you need to stay in contact is a critical step to the success of any good networking strategy. You never know when someone is thinking of you or when you can be of help to an organization unless you stay in touch.

Identify some way to track your communication. Some networkers find creating a spreadsheet to be helpful, while others find calendars to be just as effective. The simple truth here is to remember who you spoke with, when you last had contact, and when a good next contact time might be. Staying connected is where most successful networkers succeed and ineffective networkers fail.

The type of connection may vary from person to person. It will also depend on the priority you set for this relationship. Most contact manager programs suggest prioritizing the contacts with an "A,B,C" or "1,2,3" methodology. The theory here is to keep you organized and focused on where the opportunities may occur. Once you have a sense of the opportunity and when it can occur you can reach out and make that connection.

People often ask, what is the best way to communicate with people? The best answer is; What ever way they respond to best. This may take some time to understand. Some people like the order and structure of e-mails and others like the spontaneity of phone calls. Regardless of the communication style, once a relationship has been established keep your communications short and sweet. Simple short reminders are the best way to stay in the forefront of your network's mind!

Communicate

Successful networking professionals spread the word about what they are seeking. Success at this level really depends on who you tell. Remember, every person who does not know what you do is one less person working to help find leads for you. Not everyone is going to be able to help you, so the more people that know your intent, the greater the chances of finding an opportunity.

Offer Something

Last but not least, when you are networking, be sure to offer something in return. You are a talented individual, and someone with a great pool of your own contacts. You have skills that provide value, and knowledge that can create efficiencies.

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