

Networking and Relationship Building

Networking can be an important tool when conducting a job search. It is said that anywhere from 70 – 80% of jobs are not posted. In order to locate those positions jobseekers need to build relationships and reach out to their network.

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 can connect you to. Make yourself pick up the phone and call or send emails and LinkedIn messages. It helps to assign yourself a quota of contacts to be made each day. Keep your calls and messages brief and to the point. When writing messages, pay attention to tone, spelling, and grammar. If you are attending a gathering of some sort, 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

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.

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.

So how can I network?

Networks can include:

- Family members

- Friends and neighbors
- Members of professional organizations
- Past employer/co-workers
- Supervisors
- Former or current Professors
- Alumni
- Church or other community contacts

Informational Interviews

Information interviews are a job search tool and show a greater return on investment when compared with more traditional methods of job search. However, when asking to meet with someone on an informational basis, do not pressure someone by asking them to help you get a specific job. Rather, ask them if they would be willing to share their story. Take a sincere interest in their story and listen to what they have to say. Ask them if they know of any others that would be willing to share their expertise with you. Thank them for their time and information. Ask how you might be able to stay in touch.

Questions to ask during an informational interview can include:

- Would you tell me your story? How did you get to this place? How did you succeed?
- Would you be willing to give me any advice?
- Would it be possible if I stayed in touch with you on a periodic basis?
- Would you recommend any other people with whom I could meet in order to hear their story?
- Also include questions specific to the type of job you are looking for which could consist of a particular task and the work environment.

After an information interview, be sure to keep in touch and maintain that relationship.

Volunteering

Volunteering can be a way to not only network and build relationships; it can also be “a foot in the door” to an organization you’d like to work for. While volunteering for an organization, watch the posted paid positions. Since you already have a relationship with the organization, they will likely consider you one of their top candidates for open positions.

Volunteering is also a way to stay active while conducting your job search. It can you keep you motivated and upbeat during a time that can be very difficult.

Employers are more likely to consider candidates that keep themselves busy even if they are not getting paid for their work.

Some resources to find volunteer positions:

www.volunteermatch.org

www.handsontwincities.org

www.voa.org