

Networking for Work - Six Degrees of Separation

Many people are daunted by the prospect of establishing a new relationship, or leveraging an existing one, as a career strategy. Not all are born communicators, not all are outgoing by nature. No matter how awkward or painful your initial attempts, there are compelling reasons to begin practicing networking.

Food for Thought

- Referrals are the number one source of external hires. While about 40 per cent of all positions are filled internally, for those positions that are filled externally, over 27 per cent are from referrals.
- Internet job boards account for less than seven per cent of hiring, with most sources citing job-board generated jobs at a paltry three per cent.
- Approximately 85 per cent of all available jobs are never posted, or advertised—anywhere.

Your referral to an unadvertised job could very well exist right now, a short networking contact away.

The \$\$Price of Inaction

Applying effective job search principles that include a compelling resume, polished interview skills, and targeted networking, have been shown to:

- Shorten your job search, slashing the time in half from the average six, to three months. Those six pay cheques can have a big impact on a family's resources;
- Increase one's earnings by an average of 23 per cent.

Six Degrees of Separation

Studies prove that most of us are connected to almost everyone in six steps. The job-hunter's networking goal is to get connected to specific people: to those who work for a targeted employer, or in a targeted position. With the end in mind you can begin networking for introductions to those who can help you.

Although it may take all six steps to connect you with Barack Obama, within our own corner of the world you may be one easy step away from your ideal introduction. Until you let your network know what you are looking for, they've no idea that you are transitioning to I.T. work and that they could introduce you to the City's Director of I.T. who happens to be a new neighbour.

Until you strike up conversations, you've no idea that the receptionist is the owner's relative filling in for a vacationing regular; that the person you've been chatting with on the bus works in RIM's H.R. department; that the client waiting at your hairdresser's lives next door to the journalist you've been trying to meet for over a year—and that all of them would be pleased to see if they can introduce you.

If you don't ask, you certainly won't receive. Learn to communicate your need, voice your intent, and see what happens. Serendipity doesn't occur in a void. To create that lucky happenstance that leads to a new job you must put in some groundwork. Look for practical networking tips in next week's Careers Weekly.