

Networking for Work - Getting Started

There's a lot of buzz about networking as a job-hunting strategy these days. It makes sense when you consider that most jobs are never advertised, and that Internet Job Boards account for less than seven percent of all jobs (some say as few as three per cent). Add the documented benefits of effective job search strategies—search time slashed in half, and an average 23 percent higher starting salary—and ignoring this key job-hunting strategy defies logic.

Networking is not an instant fix, although one could always tap into “beginner’s luck.” Most of us must gather our courage and confidence, apply self-discipline with persistence, and persevere until luck finds us. Here are a few practical networking ideas.

Get Started

- ☑ Ask for an informational meeting with someone who is doing the job you want. Use the meeting to ask questions about necessary credentials, industry trends and so on. Do not ask for a job; build a relationship.
- ☑ Research companies to identify which ones you would love to work for. Contact your immediate network of friends, family, and neighbours, and ask who knows of someone employed by one of these companies. Ask them to ask their circle as well. Remember that we are all connected through a scant six degrees of separation.
- ☑ Join professional organizations, alumni groups, social clubs, volunteer organizations, sports teams—whichever suits your style. Network within these.
- ☑ Read with an eye for new business news, calendars of events, construction projects, interviews with local business leaders—and follow up on promising leads.
- ☑ Go for it. If you see a job that you truly fit, approach the receptionist or call the supervisor. If you can't speak with the right person, perhaps you can get your resume in front of the right person.
- ☑ Create an online presence with profiles on LinkedIn, MySpace or Twitter. Write a blog, post articles on EzineArticles.com and create your free resume webpage on VisualCV.com.
- ☑ Create a business card for networking purposes that contains not only your contact information, but also your Value Proposition (see the article similarly titled). Carry it at all times and hand out a few daily.

Hiring is a social act. Most hires are based not only on skill and past experience, but also on chemistry. If you don't “fit” the company, you're not offered the position. Networking allows you to establish a connection before the interview process. It also proves that you are a go-getter, and that you know how to communicate and develop relationships.

As you go about meeting people make sure that you maintain an atmosphere of mutual exchange, not personal gain. Be present, not thinking of your next appointment; be selective, not trying to squish as many contacts as possible into every day; and make the effort to establish ongoing relationships when you feel a connection. Share ideas, information, and resources—helping with true value establishes your true value!

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