

The Do's and Don'ts of Effective Networking

What is Networking?

Many people don't realize it, but we all network and we do it more often than most people think. In the past few years, **networking** has become an increasingly common term used most often when referring to one's job search, but what does the term 'networking' really mean? Networking can be a formal process, like at a business lunch or event or it can be as simple as talking with your family and friends. **Networking is creating a relationship or solidifying an already existing relationship in order to develop a resource that will assist in making the right connections.** Statistics show that networking is THE most effective way to connect with an opportunity or an organization. Anyone can be a networking resource for you. Your doctor, your pastor, aunts, uncles, cousins, past co-workers, professors/teachers, neighbors...everyone you know could very well be a potential resource.

It is also important that you establish professional networks with those groups or individuals who have similar career experience and interests. Whether it be a professional association, club or group, getting yourself connected within those circles is critical to your success at connecting with the right people at the right time.

How DO you network?

The key to successful networking is to:

First, know and understand your desired outcome. Are you looking for a job, an internship, a professional connection, a contact at a company? Understanding your own desired outcomes will help you to formulate your game plan.

Second, start talking to people. Find out who knows who. You may be surprised that someone in your family knows someone who can connect you with the right person; you may find that your neighbor is best friends with the recruiter at XYZ hospital; you may find out that *your* best friend's sister in law is the HR Director at the company you are dying to get in to. You will never know who knows who unless you talk to people.-

Finally, keep at it. Putting your networking needs front and center in your every day conversations will open up the possibilities of connecting with the right person whether directly or through someone you know. And THAT is what networking is all about.



What NOT to do when networking.

Ok...so networking isn't rocket science. It is basically talking to people and getting information. But just because it is simple doesn't mean there aren't things to be aware of. Below are three of the top things people do wrong when networking. These mistakes can be very costly not only for your immediate networking success, but could also hinder any future opportunities to connect with the right people.

Waiting

Many people start networking only after they've lost their jobs. Effective networking means creating contacts and relationships while you're still employed. Being unemployed creates stress in your life which can lead you to make poor choices. The best time to look for a job and to create those networks is when you are working. You are in a much better position to make informed, unemotional and rational decisions when you don't have the added pressure of no paycheck coming in.

Treating Your Networking Relationships as Short-Term Flings

No one likes to be used. Follow up every conversation with a thank-you note, email or call. Let your contact know whether his suggestions panned out or not. When your job search ends -- for whatever reason -- inform the person who has helped you. You may think your networking is over, but your paths may cross again.

Forgetting Where You Came From

Anyone who has ever networked, whether successfully or not, owes an obligation to all those who will network in the future. Return the favor and help someone else. Networking is a two way street, be sure you are available to those who have helped you and be open to helping others. You never know when you will need to tap in to your network again, so keeping those lines of communication open and active are critical.

For more information on networking and other career development information, check out these web sites:

Quintessential Careers	www.quintcareers.com
Careers.org	www.careers.org
The Riley Guide	www.rileyguide.com