



The Hidden Job Market: Networking

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The majority of all jobs are not advertised so networking is an essential part of the process of tapping into the hidden job market to locate potential employment opportunities.

There is no mystery to networking. Networks function most successfully around shared interests and everyone has access to formal and informal networks. We already use networks to find out about all kinds of information; from which Indian restaurant has the best curries, to who is a good dentist, to what unit is more interesting to study etc. Networking assumes that you are aware of your skills and have identified at least a general area of interest you want to explore further.

The key to being a good networker is to build good relationships with others. It often involves sharing information, undertaking research and looking for opportunities to build on your existing networks by making a contribution.

Networking can also give you insights into which firm provides the best training or challenging work and whether there is likely to be a vacancy in your area of interest.

Graduates have used their networking skills to gain work experience, knowledge and employment in all kinds of niche areas as well as in traditional roles like law, computing, journalism and international consulting. Using your networking skills to locate work that matches your knowledge, skills and values can often feel confronting, but so often the rewards of effective networking make it worthwhile.

NETWORKING STEPS

Step 1. Construct your own story (two or three paragraphs) highlighting your degree, your interest in a particular area, a specific example of your interest and a reason for contacting the person. For example, "This year I will complete a ... degree majoring in ... and I am thinking about further study in ... to help get into the ... field. Would it be possible to meet for a few minutes to explore a few ideas I have about this and get some feedback from you?"

Step 2. Sit down somewhere quiet with a notepad and pen and brainstorm a list under each of the following categories:

- People close to you – these will include family, friends and relatives.
- Other people you know – this may include professionals you deal with on a daily basis (for example lecturers), sporting colleagues or fellow club members and any contacts you may have through volunteer work etc.
- People you need to know – this may include members of Professional Associations (become a member), small/medium business owners and/or managers etc.
- People you don't know but who could be helpful, this may include past graduates, people working in an area you are interested in, or leaders in the field.

Step 3. Once you have developed a list, prioritise which people to contact. Do some research to help refine your story, improve your knowledge of the person or organisation and anything else that adds to your credibility, but above all be yourself and be professional (for example, visit their website).

Step 4. Set a goal to make contact with someone by a certain date. It is useful to start within your comfort zone, a friend, lecturer, receptionist, professional association representative etc. Later, as you gain confidence, be bolder about who you contact. You will be surprised that you will often get a response from the most

senior people. You can contact people by phone, email, in person or in writing – whatever is within your comfort zone.

Step 5. Information interviewing is an excellent low stress way of getting first-hand knowledge in a career field or organisation of interest to you. It involves contacting an individual in an organisation and interviewing them to find out what they like about their job, what they find frustrating, what they see as their key achievement in the role, what skills are required, what the future trends might be etc.

Step 6. Make use of what you learn and thank people for their time.

The aim is to generate other contacts to add to your network and ultimately to identify job leads that relate to your area of interest and lead to employment.

MORE RESOURCES ON NETWORKING

The Career Development and Employment Service has available for borrowing the following resources which will help in establishing a networking group:

Networking for Everyone, L. Michelle Tullier, 1998, JIST Works Inc., Indianapolis, IN.

The Secrets of Finding and Keeping a Job 2nd edition, Robert B. Burns, 1999, Business & Professional Publishing Pty Limited, Warriewood, NSW.

Powerful Networking, John Lockett, 1999, Orion Business, London.

How to Master Networking, Robyn Henderson, 1997, Prentice-Hall Australia Pty Ltd, Sydney.

Can I have a few minutes of your time? 1997, Teaching Support and Media Services, (commissioned by the Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services), Southampton, UK.

(The above video is available for viewing at the Career Development and Employment Service in Hobart & Launceston).