

NETWORKING YOUR WAY TO A NEW JOB

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Career experts estimate that the vast majority of job openings are never advertised or publicly announced, but filled through word-of-mouth or networking -- known as the "hidden job market." The likelihood of a job opening not being advertised at all increases with the level of the job. Yet, even with this knowledge, most job seekers fail to fully utilize networking for all it's worth.

Networking means developing a broad list of contacts -- people you've met through various social and business functions -- and using them to your advantage when you look for a job. People in your network may be able to give you job leads, offer you advice and information about a particular company or industry, and introduce you to other so that you can expand your network.

The best place to start developing your network is with your family, friends, and neighbors -- and with their family, friends, and neighbors, but don't stop there. Talk to co-workers, colleagues in your industry, and those you meet at industry gatherings, such as trade shows and conferences. Talk with former co-workers, bosses, and teachers.

The key to successful networking is deciding to commit the energy needed to make it work. First, you need to get organized (for example, keeping a business card file or computer database). Second, you need to stay in contact (for example, through regular phone calls, email, and holiday greetings). Third, you need to set goals for yourself (such as 5 new contacts per week).

The Steps to Successful Networking:

1. **Develop a firm grasp of job search basics.**
2. **Conduct a self-assessment.** An honest review of your work values and skills, strengths and weaknesses is vital.
3. **Prepare a strong resume.** If you don't already have a resume, now is the time to develop one.
4. **Decide how to organize your network.** This step is crucial to your success. If you have ongoing access to a computer, the best method is a database or spreadsheet where you can enter key information, such as names, titles, company names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, email addresses, and dates of communication. Keeping an organized collection of business cards, where you can write notes and comments about your network, is another alternative.
5. **Communicate with your network.** It is extremely important to stay in touch with your network, which you can easily do by phone, mail, or email. Don't be afraid to ask for their help. Most people like helping others, and you must communicate your current needs with your network in order for them to be able to help you.
6. **Initiate informational interviews.** One of the best ways to gain more information about an occupation or industry -- and to build a network of contacts in that field -- is to talk

with people who are currently working in the field. The purpose of the informational interview is to obtain information, not to get a job.

7. **Follow up with your network.** The key is keeping your network informed of your situation and thanking them for their efforts. Never take your network for granted.

QUESTIONS

Preparation:

What preparation is necessary for entry level jobs in this field?

How important is graduate school in this field?

Could you recommend some courses that I should be taking now in preparation for a career in this field?

How does your education and experience relate to what you are doing now?

How did you get into this field and into this position? What are some alternative routes into the field? What kind of background, training, special programs or other learning experiences does one need to enter the field?

What professional journals, books, newspapers or publications do people in your field generally read? Are any professional associations particularly influential?

Is there any advice you would give someone just entering the field, maybe something that you wish someone had mentioned when you were starting?

Lifestyle:

What kind of "lifestyle" choices have you had to make? How many hours do you work in a typical week? Do you take work home at night?

Is travel involved in your job and if so, how often are you traveling?

What is the typical salary range for an entry-, mid-, and upper-level position?

Do you need to dress in a particular way?

Has your work experience differed very much from what you imagined it would be? In what way?

Job Outlook:

Do you anticipate employment in this field to grow, decrease, or remain stable?

What are the opportunities for advancement? Is there a high turnover rate and if so, why?

What types of employers hire people in your line of work?

You mentioned that you made a transition into this field from another career path. How difficult was this?

What job choices are there within this field and to what types of other organizations can one move?

Job Routine:

Describe how you spend your time during a typical work day/week.

What major satisfactions do you derive from working in this field?

What are some of the issues/problems that you must deal with in your work?

(If you are interested in the company the alumnus is working for) Could you tell me a little about the management style here? How are promotions decided? What does one need to be successful in this field?

Job Search Techniques:

What strategies would you be using if you were in a job search for a position in this field?

Would you mind reviewing my resume and giving me feedback on it?

What types of questions should I expect when interviewing for a job in this field?

Could you give me the names of others who might tell me more about your field? May I say you suggested I contact them?

ETIQUETTE -- Do's and Don'ts of Informational Interviewing

DO research the field you're exploring so you have questions to ask.

DO dress as if you're going to a job interview or as professionals in this type of work would dress. You don't want to embarrass yourself or your contact.

DO schedule about 30 to 45 minutes for the interview and be aware of the time. Watch for cues that it's time to leave, such as glancing at a watch, or winding down a conversation.

DO pay attention to your thoughts, body signals and reactions during the interview. If you feel energetic and excited, this type of atmosphere may suit you. If you feel bored or tired, perhaps this isn't a match.

DON'T ask for a job -- even if you are bursting to do so! You could, however, say something like this: "I really enjoyed meeting with you and learning about your television station and what a producer does. WGJX is the kind of setting where I would like to work. Do you know of stations with a similar work culture that I might contact?"

DON'T book too many interviews back-to-back. Allow flexibility in case your contact chooses to spend more time with you or to introduce you to others.

DON'T just talk about yourself. The more the contact talks about the job, the career steps and the field, the more you will learn. In fact, the whole idea is not to focus on yourself, but to talk about the contact.

DO ask for names of more people to contact, and if it's okay to use his/her name when you contact others.

DO write a thank-you note within two days of the interview, referring to any particularly helpful or thought provoking information the contact gave you.

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