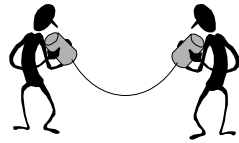


Chapter 7: Networking

The N-Verb

Networking is the most guaranteed method of getting a new job, because it puts the factors for achieving success in the hands of the person who cares the most about the outcome: you! To do it effectively, it is important to know what networking is, with whom it is done, and what is said during an effective networking call or meeting. More importantly, you must start your networking with a very clear idea of how you want to present yourself. You need to be able to present yourself to all sorts of people in under 30 seconds, and leave them with complete confidence that they understand what you do, and how they can help you get a new job. You also need to be alert to pick up important bits of information about changes in companies and industries, such as who is expanding and who is having problems.



Networking is a process that uncovers jobs via information that you get by talking to people.

That does not necessarily mean that a friend of yours ends up getting you a job at his company, though that might be ideal, but that through your contact with that person and others, a job

eventually is secured. For example, a friend of yours may put you in touch with his brother-in-law, who in turn knows someone at a company in your desired industry. If he arranges for you to meet with the hiring manager of a department where a position is available, and you are hired, you have actually found that position through networking!

What Do You Say to a Networking Contact?

1. Identify yourself and offer appropriate greeting.
2. Explain what happened at your company briefly and objectively.
3. Describe what it is that you are looking for.
4. Let them know how they can help.

What Can They Do For You?

- a. Review your resume.
- b. Keep their ears “open” for any available position for which you would be qualified.
- c. Suggest other contacts for you to talk to.

Note: Remember, you don't need to ask them for a job. If they are aware of an opportunity, they will let you know.

Uncovering Your Network

The following is a list of ideas of people who may serve as possible networking contacts:

Who Can I Contact?

From my family?

- Mother, Father
- In-laws
- Sisters
- Brothers
- Others

From my old job?

- Former employees/employers
- Fellow workers
- Customers/Clients
- Former competitors
- Others

Through my church/place of worship?

- Fellow members
- Church leaders
- Sunday school teachers
- Ushers
- Officers
- Others

From a school attended?

- Sorority/fraternity friends
- Schoolmates
- Alumni associates
- Professors
- University Officials
- Others

Other kinds of professionals?

- Doctors
- Bankers
- Insurance Agents
- Accountants

From my past?

- Neighbors
- Friends
- Customers
- Armed Forces
- Others

From my hobbies?

- Club members
- Card groups
- Sports (Bowling, Tennis)
- Athletic clubs
- Others

Through my children?

- Teachers
- Parents of their playmates
- Coaches
- PTA
- Others

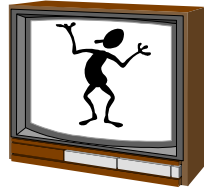
Through public service or charitable interests?

- Community Fund
- Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteer Association
- YMCA/YWCA
- Others

- Dentists
- Lawyers
- Others

30 Second Commercials

As you begin contacting people, you will discover that people will ask you many questions because they want to understand what you do, and what you are looking for.



Hopefully, they will start to imagine how you might fit into their company or companies they know about. You want to make it very easy for them to understand how they can help you.

A 30 second commercial is a way to spoon-feed them the information you want them to have just as you would spoon feed a baby. The purpose is to give the listener a few general facts about you and your career, so that he can network with you. The 30-second commercial answers the question, “Tell me about yourself.” It also becomes the basis of the summary on your resume, and the introduction on your cover letters. We want you to have a polished, practiced way of answering the “Tell me about yourself” question so that there is no chance of you losing it and going on and on about something irrelevant to your job search. People do not have a lot of patience, especially in this world of sound bites.

Practice your own 30-second commercial, using the following information:

Name?
Job Title?
Years of experience?
What you actually do or like to do?
Kinds of companies where you do it?
What you are looking for?

**Irrelevant?
 Negative? Leave it out.**

Here are a few examples:

“Hi, I’m Tom Jones, I’m a lousy lounge singer who has been crooning old ballads since the 1950’s. My specialty is head lining in Las Vegas at second rate clubs, where I get to sing songs that you have not heard since you were in kindergarten. If you know of any smoke filled lounges needing a washed up sex symbol, I would appreciate knowing about them.”

“Hi, my name is Ebola Virus, and I’m a contagion newly arrived from abroad. I like to infect people of all ages, and am particularly good at making humans ill for a long time. There is no known cure for my talents. I am looking for some low antibody individuals who

are receptive to new viruses and virulent strains.”

“Hi, my name is Polly Anna, and I am a perpetual optimist with eleven years of experience in gaiety, denial, disclaimers, and mirth. My specialty is seeing exactly what is going on yet not seeing it at the same time. I have experience doing this both individually and in groups. I am looking for a troubled environment full of lots of problems that I will not see.”

Preparing Your Purpose and Story

To be interesting and to make the most of your contact time, you must have a well thought-out purpose and story for each informational meeting. The time

will pass rapidly. What will you talk about?

As part of your preparation write down what you plan to say on three important topics and practice aloud until you're comfortable without using your notes. Your goal is to sound spontaneous, positive, and focused. You'll also want to be brief and save time for your contacts' feedback and suggestions.

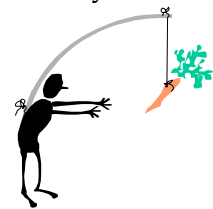
- **Your Purpose For The Meeting:** Make sure you know why you are seeking their advice (because they have experience and knowledge that would be helpful to you) and be prepared to tell them the kind of information you're looking for, such as information about a company or industry, and names of other contacts and decision-makers. Include how much time you'll take (15-20 minutes of their time) or whatever they agreed to over the phone.
- **Your 1-2 Minute Introduction:** Be prepared to briefly summarize your background touching on four areas (e.g., born/raised, education, work experience, current situation) including a statement about why you are leaving. You will be providing this information so that the contact has a context for your job goals and marketing strategy.
- **Your Strategy:** Be prepared to briefly state your job goals, marketing strategy, and target industries or companies. This will establish the basis for the questions you'll ask or opinions you'll solicit, and will also

demonstrate that you've done your research.

Overcoming Your Reluctance

If contacts can be so helpful, why do most people avoid them?

The reason is because people shy away from "asking favors" of friends and business acquaintances if they feel



that they are imposing, and might be rejected. If you are reluctant to network because you think that people don't want to be bothered, you need to think through your basic attitudes about networking, and you also need to prepare a few lines about who you are and why you are calling.

To tackle attitudes first, there are a couple of important concepts about networking that you need to be clear about:

- Don't feel that you are asking favors of your colleagues. You are really information seeking. That changes the frame of reference into something far more acceptable to everyone concerned. Now the emphasis is on seeking advice and guidance from people whose judgment and opinions you respect and value.
- You don't ask a contact for a job! In your very first contact, which is usually by phone, you make that clear. You are seeking information and ideas from them, not a job. Most of your contacts will be unable to offer you a job, or even a tangible lead, and they would feel

embarrassed to have to “reject” you. Put them at ease by making reasonable and realistic requests.

- No matter how uneasy you may feel about asking for help, be aware that most people are really glad to be of help if you approach them in a considerate manner. The reasons they are willing to talk to you include:
 1. Most have the natural human urge to help someone else, and many will secretly identify with your situation.
 2. Some get an ego boost out of the expert role of advising and consulting with you.
 3. If you are well prepared and informed about your industry, they stand to learn from your sharing of ideas.

There is one category of contact that may resist being networked, the conspicuous executives or public figures who are becoming a bit “over-networked.” Your best strategy with these busy people is to make it clear that you are well organized and will limit your time to, say, 15 minutes. They will not react kindly to boring visitors or broadly fishing questions like, “Well, what do you see happening in the industry these days?”

Even your good friends may feel uneasy until they know what information you are after and how they can help, so you need to prepare some conversation openings to use on the phone and in person.

Establishing Initial Contact

When your contact list is ready, begin networking with the people with whom you are most comfortable and work up to the more difficult ones. Tell these easy ones what information you need and that you need help; ask for their advice. It is important that you do not ask anyone for a job. Avoid putting your contact through the unpleasantness of saying “no” before you get warmed up. If they think of a job, now or later, they will bring it up.



Make your initial contact by phone. Introduce yourself if they don’t know you well, if it has been a while since you talked with them, or if you were referred. Use your 30-second commercial. Tell them that you are seeking advice about your job search campaign, then ask for a brief meeting, and get off the phone. Reassure them that you are not expecting them to know of a job for you, but that you believe their advice and guidance will be valuable. If they suggest that you go to the Personnel Department, say that you plan to do that, but right now what you need is their advice.

For some people, the first few phone calls may seem awkward or embarrassing. The best way to overcome this feeling is to plunge ahead. It also helps to:

- Make notes of key things you want to say. Keep your resume beside the telephone to act as a script.

- Practice your opening sentences on a tape recorder and listen to it played back, or get a friend to listen and comment.
- Get to your key points, your situation and your needs quickly and directly. Very soon you will be involved in a two-way conversation, and you will feel more comfortable.

Most of the time you should make initial contact by phone; however there are two exceptions to this:

1. After several unsuccessful tries by phone, you may consider writing a brief note to let the contact know you will be calling again on a specific date to arrange a meeting.
2. If the person is someone with whom you haven't been in touch for some time and you haven't been able to establish phone contact, you may want to send a letter that conveys your "story" to update the person on your career progress. Then let the person know when you will call to catch up by phone.

Examples of Making Initial Contact

When you first call, you must be prepared to get right into the subject, get your appointment, and get off the phone, without getting into a "phone interview." Here are some sample starters:

For a primary contact, someone who knows you:

"Charley, I'm planning to leave Acme in the next few weeks, and I've been giving serious thought to my career goals and what my next career step

might be. I've worked up a marketing strategy for myself, and I'd like to drop by for a few minutes and get your reactions and input. You know the industry very well, and you also know quite a bit about me. Could we spend 20 to 30 minutes together later this week?" (Time: 27 seconds)

For a secondary contact, (someone you have been referred to but have never met):

"Ms. Carpenter, our mutual friend, Bill Dodge, referred me to you. I'm planning to leave American Robotics this month, and I've developed a career plan that's aimed at the new industrial robot industry. Bill said you have a lot of insight into that new field, and that you might be willing to give me your thoughts on my self-marketing strategy. I've done considerable reading on the subject, and I'm very excited about it. But I sense there's a lot happening that's not published. Could we spend 15-20 minutes together next week?" (Time: 34 seconds)

Although cold calls (to strangers) are not usually thought of as networking, you may have no other alternative to reaching a target company decision-maker when you can't get an introduction, and a letter seems too slow and uncertain. In a sense, you have to create your own contact, and you need a "one-minute commercial" to break the ice:

"Mr. Eichelberger, I'm a tax manager at Alias Wavefront, and one of those who will not be going to Silicon

Graphics. In planning my next career step, I've developed a strategy for applying depreciation allowances to manufacturing companies, such as Cisco Systems and Lam Research. I have learned of your long interest in federal tax policy for industries, and wondered if you would be willing to spend a few minutes with me sharing ideas. I would be particularly keen on learning of companies that are on the move in this field. Could we spend 15 to 20 minutes together early next week?" Time: 41 seconds)

Prepare your own appropriate lead-ins. Write them down, time them, and practice them until they feel right for you.

For the two exceptions that would be handled by writing a letter, refer to Appendix 7a for a description and sample of a Last Resort Networking Letter.



The Networking Meeting

When you arrive at your networking meeting (also called a courtesy interview or informational interview), you will need to have a clear agenda and purpose. Be sure to bring a copy of your resume as well.

Here are some agenda ideas that you can adapt to your special needs:

Social Amenities:

- Exchange business cards for follow-up and to update your contact list.
- Mention the name of your referral.
- A minute or two of small talk or reminiscing may be needed to help break the ice or bridge from past to present. Don't let this drag on.

Purpose of Meeting:

- Propose an agenda and time limit (such as 20 minutes) for your meeting. (You promised to make it short. How busy is your contact?)
- Then you might want to ask the people you talk to about themselves; what their career path has been, what they are currently doing, and tell them why they are important to you. Tell them that you are seeking their advice because they have experience and knowledge that will be helpful to you.

Brief Introduction:

- Present your 1-2 minute background summary.
- Include a brief statement of why you are leaving or have left your employer.

Strategy Summary:

- Outline your job goals and marketing strategy for achieving them.
- Mention your target industries and the specific target companies you have already identified. Perhaps talk about anything you've learned that may be of interest to your contact. (By doing



this you make it clear that you have something to offer, and are not merely sponging information.)

- Present your resume for reference or feedback.

Ask Questions:

- Ask for feedback, advice, or information on your marketing campaign. (Be prepared to take notes.)
- Seek names and referrals of key people managers and decision-makers for your type of job, policy-makers, etc. Get the names of three additional people you can contact (secondary contacts for your work file.)

Closure on Joint Items:

- Get closure on any follow-up or action items either of you agreed to.
- Offer to keep the contact informed on your campaign progress.

Challenges

Of course, your contacts may have their own agendas. For example, they may want to talk about themselves and their careers, too. Or they may present the following challenges:

- The contact says, “Well, I can’t think of any names right now, but if I do, I’ll give you a call.” Push them gently, probing about such categories as professional or trade associations, other firms in the same industry, etc. If none of these categories evokes a response, and they still can’t think of anyone for you to talk to, suggest that you’ll call

in a week to see if a possible referral has come up.

- The contact says, “I know a few people who would like to see your resume. I’ll be happy to spread it around.” If the person is a real networker, say “Yes!” Otherwise, mention that you value their offer to do that, but that it would be more helpful for you to know the referral names so that you can contact these people directly. Then persevere in your efforts to meet this contact by stressing that your referral said they had key information on the job market.

Following Up the Networking Meeting

Follow up on networking meetings with brief thank-you notes or e-mails. If you’ve agreed to send material or information, do so. Call your contacts periodically to touch base, cement the relationship, and to keep your name/situation on their minds. With all of your networking contacts, take the initiative and stay in control of the next step. When you get a new name to contact, use your networking acquaintance’s name to open the door (ask permission first.) If someone offers to write a letter of introduction or reference, say that you’ll draft and type it for their signature. If a contact takes your resume to pass on, find out who it is going to and follow-up yourself. If you network effectively, you may soon have people calling you to let you know about possible job openings. But even if you don’t ultimately land a job this way, networking will:

Chapter 7: Networking

- Give you a clearer focus of your accomplishments and goals
- Increase your knowledge of the industry and the competition
- Introduce you to many valuable personal and professional contacts
- Force you to practice your communication skills