

Networking

Networking is one of the most effective job search techniques you can use. Many positions are never advertised, and networking is the best way to learn about these opportunities.

Networking involves utilizing friends, relatives and acquaintances to learn about employment opportunities. Making acquaintance with people who can give you information about your career field and who to talk to within that field is a big part of the process.

Make it your business to know as many people as possible. Regardless of the stage of your career, the process of building a large number of contacts is invaluable when seeking or changing employment.



How to Network

When you are networking, one of your goals should be to set up informational meetings with people in your desired career field. A first step should be to ask contacts in your field that you already know, or can easily get to know, for a brief informational meeting. They, in turn, can help you contact new people that they know well. If you do not know someone in your field, let the people that you do come in contact with know that you are looking for employment and the kind of employment you are seeking. Oftentimes, someone that you know can put you in touch with a contact that can lead to employment.

Develop Contact Lists

Make a list of people you know who might be able to give you a contact in your field. As your search progresses, you will find that almost everyone can lead you to someone who might be helpful. Consider the following when developing your contact list:

- Family/Friends
- Friends/Colleagues
- Faculty/Staff Members
- Friends of friends
- College alumni
- Fraternity/Sorority Alumni
- Former business associates
- Co-workers/Bosses
- Professionals
- Company Representatives
- People at Professional/Trade Associations
- Neighbors/Community contacts
- Club/church members
- People you meet anywhere
- Other job seekers

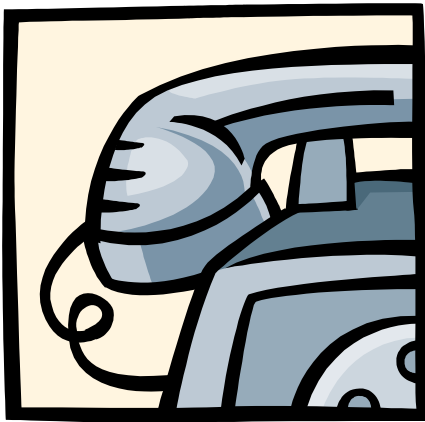
Make Contacts

Contact the individuals you have identified. Motivate yourself to contact a certain number of people each week and force yourself to meet your goal. Write letters and make telephone calls.

When you are making the contact be sure to identify yourself, why you are calling or writing and the sources of your contact. For example, *“This is Bill Jones, Bob Smith suggested I call you. I am currently a student at Missouri Western State College. I am interested in marketing and would like to talk with you about your experience in the field. Could we set up a time to talk for about 15 minutes?”*

In a letter, provide some brief information about yourself, which is relevant to the industry. Also, in the final paragraph of the letter, indicate that you will be calling at a specific time to set up a meeting and then be sure to call at that time!

On the phone, make sure you have a list of specific questions with you in case your contact does not have time to meet but is willing to talk with you for a few minutes at that time.



You might want to ask:

- What is their position and responsibilities
- What is their background and experience
- What skills and knowledge are needed to be successful in the position
- What kinds of opportunities exist for someone with your background
- What trade journals or newsletters you should read
- If there is anyone else you should contact to discuss this industry

* As you make each contact, keep the new information and contact names that you receive organized. Follow-up with people when you say you will and be persistent if you have trouble reaching certain individuals.

Networking Tips

- Keep asking personal contacts for additional names of people to see.
- Attend events that have networking potential such as trade shows, job fairs, guest lectures and professional conferences.
- Collect business cards from anyone you speak with who has contacts in your field.
- Always remember that you are primarily interested in obtaining information about potential employers.
- When you make a contact you are not looking for a job interview but only an informational meeting. If your contact thinks that you only want to set up an appointment to sell yourself then they may not be willing to meet with you.

- Have your questions prepared in advance and be able to illustrate that you are sincerely interested in obtaining information.
- Do your research and be knowledgeable about the industry prior to your meeting.
- Be confident and present yourself as a person who is capable and thoroughly interested in the field.
- Send out well-prepared thank you letters after each meeting with a personal contact. (See Business Correspondence for examples)
- Keep a record of your contacts.