

The Art of Networking

Professional networking is about making contacts and building relationships that can lead to jobs or other work-related opportunities. Done right, it can help you obtain leads, referrals, advice, information, and support. It is an essential component of any successful job search, and when done right leads to more job placements than more formal avenues.

Here are some pointers on how to build and sustain your employment networks.

Know how to make your pitch

A key part of effective networking is being clear about your employment goals and the assets you would bring to the company. Express them well during encounters with your contacts. Prepare talking points and practice delivering them, whether you have 10 seconds, 60 seconds or 10 minutes.

Build your Net Worth

Your network is your “net worth.” Your network will include people you know well, acquaintances and referrals. Be creative.

Begin by creating a list of your primary contacts. This is a partial list of who it can include:

- Neighbors: Current and past
- Relatives: Local and out-of-town
- Members of your shul
- Former Classmates (any grade or school)
- Children's contacts, parents of their friends
- Organizations or community events that you are involved in
- Former employers, including supervisors and co-workers
- Friends: Local and out-of-town
- Participants in trade shows, seminars or workshops you've attended
- Professionals: lawyers, accountants, doctors, dentists, insurance agents,

Cast a wide net for networking

Ask for referrals from members of your primary contacts' networks and gain valuable exposure by building a rich network of secondary contacts.

When a contact gives you leads or referrals, be sure to ask for permission to use the contact's name. Keep detailed records of your networking activity: to whom did you talk, about what, when, and what were the results? For each of your primary and secondary contacts, identify next steps and develop a reliable follow-up system. The key is to be persistent and actually follow up.

Additional Tips

- Follow through with referrals, and always thank contacts in person and with a follow up email.
- Keep those who are interested posted on the progress of your job search or career change
- Make a list of at least 8-10 assets you will bring as a prospective employee.
- Bring business cards and a pen and paper.
- Write some notes so you'll remember the details on who you have just met on the business cards you collect, or in a notebook.
- When networking online, keep track of who you've emailed and where you have posted so you can follow up.
- Make yourself available as a resource for other job seekers, and treat them as you would like to be treated by those with whom you network.

Ask permission to name-drop

It's important to remember to get permission before using your contacts name when applying. You do not want to lose the trust of your connection by using their name if they feel uncomfortable about it. Once you have their permission, then using names is a great way to build common ground with a hiring manager or employer.

Use your reference in email and cover letter

Once you have permission to use your contact's name , use his/her name in your initial application by email and in your cover letter; it will distinguish you from the other applicants. You can write that you were referred by your connection regarding a specific position and he thought that you would be a good fit and that based on the information you learned from your contact, you are confident that you are a good fit for the company/ position.

When you reach the interviewing stage, definitely mention your contact again.

Keep your reference informed of progress

After you submit your resume, cover letter, and any other required application to the hiring manager, let your contact know. You may be able to access insider information that will guide your next steps.

Keep this line of communication open throughout the entire application process with quick status updates, and be sure to express your enthusiasm about the opportunity in each message.

So, open your laptop or take out a pen and paper and start making a list of your first 50 contacts.

Happy Networking!