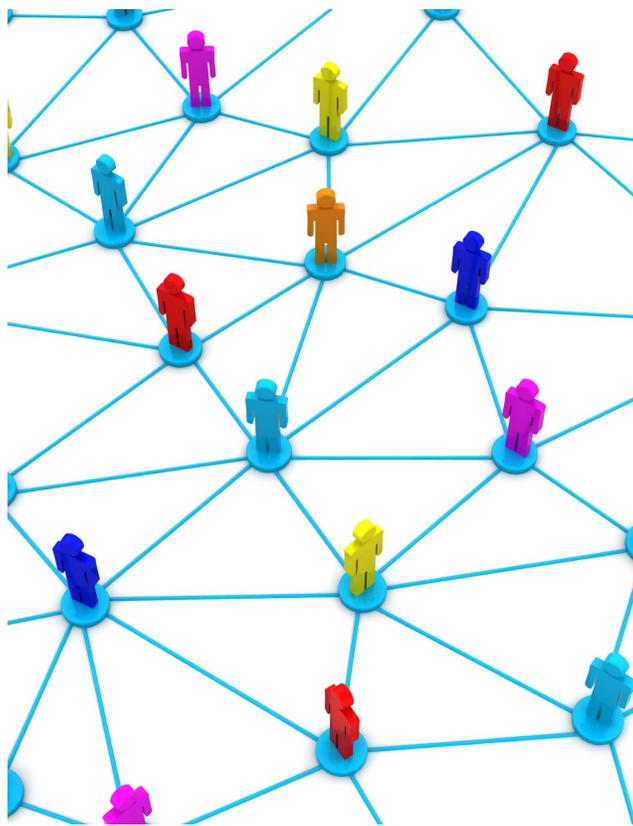

Networking Strategy



NETWORKING

What Is Networking?

Networking is intentionally meeting and exchanging information with people in a particular career field, industry or employer. Ideally networking results in developing alliances and contacts for mutual benefit.

Knowing and contacting accessible, knowledgeable people is helpful when you need to ask for their advice, explore options, and obtain leads for other contacts.

Networking works best when it is your intention to make legitimate, mutually beneficial connections with people. Most people can quickly identify when someone is reaching out for their benefit alone!



Building your network can help you:

- Gain greater perspective about the work unit and position you are interested in.
- Keep current with trends and perspectives in your field of interest.
- Learn about unpublished job opportunities (a significant amount of hiring happens this way!).
- Be referred to an opportunity you did not know about.
- Connect directly with those responsible for hiring through personal introductions.
- Establish your personal brand with others.
- Increase your base of contacts.

In what ways has your network supported you in the past? What concerns do you have about your current network? What about increasing your networking activities? Make a few notes and bring these to your next meeting with your Career Coach so that you can brainstorm solutions together.

Who's in Your Network Now?

How have you built your professional network so far? What techniques or approaches worked for you? Have you considered connections that might not be work colleagues but may still be useful in your network? Take a few minutes to add names to each box below.

Former Colleagues

Former Clients

Former or Current Classmates

--	--	--

Friends

Social Club, Hobbies

Volunteer Connections

--	--	--

Family

Professional Services
(Accountant, Insurance, etc)

Community or Government
Leaders

--	--	--

Who have been the most helpful connections so far in terms of your career?

--

Super Connectors are people who have a wider than usual circle of personal and professional contacts. Do you know any Super Connectors? If so, enter their names.

--

Expanding Your Network

Expanding your network takes dedication and work. It helps to be organized and intentional in your efforts. A number of things can get in your way and stall your progress:

- Not setting aside time to work on expanding your circle of contacts.
- Not having a plan of action and a schedule for implementing it.
- Being shy in new settings or with new people.
- Having trouble identifying and expressing your strengths and capabilities.
- Reaching out to people beyond your “comfort zone.”
- Being uncomfortable making “cold calls” or contacting people who haven’t met you before.
- Expecting others to do the work for you.
- Not following through; not showing up or calling when you say you will.

What’s getting in the way of your networking efforts?

Strategies for Expanding Your Network

There are many strategies you can use to expand your personal and professional connections. Some of the most effective ones are:

- Work with your Career Coach to establish your networking strategy.
- Be generous to others. The more people you help, the more help you will receive.
- Pay particular attention to, and nurture your relationships with Super Connectors.
- Seek out a mentor who can share their experience and path to success.
- Ask your current network to help you connect to other people in your field of interest.
- Try out new activities; reach out to new groups.
- Actively participate in Communities of Practice.
- Ask your connections for referrals.
- Develop connections with people outside your normal group of friends and colleagues.

- Show up for social or other informal office events.
- Establish a presence on LinkedIn by working with your Career Coach to maximize your use of the functional and connective abilities of LinkedIn.

Choose 3 things from the above list that you would like to focus on to start.

Preparing for a networking meeting

Prepare for your networking meetings by deciding on objectives in advance. By doing so, you create an agenda and will structure your meetings to maximize your time with each contact. For example, your objectives may be to:

- Identify key players you want to meet (such as decision makers in your target companies)
- Obtain information about the growth or hiring trends of other companies in your industry
- Brainstorm names of other industry-related companies
- Obtain at least three names of other professionals in your industry
- Ask your contact to call ahead to a potential employer and introduce you and your skills
- Brainstorm about your career options
- Discuss how your skills may translate to a new but related industry
- Obtain feedback on your resume

Exploratory Questions to Ask in a Networking Meeting

Before interviewing, consider the questions you will want to ask. Possible questions include:

- Would you be willing to look at my target list and tell me if you have any contacts in these companies?
- Can you name other companies that might be interested in someone with my background?
- Do you know the names of any good recruiters in my field?
- Do you have any ideas about industry associations or strategies I may not have considered?
- Do you know the names of any industry specific websites I could investigate?
- Would you take a look at my resume and offer me feedback?
- Are you aware of any companies in the area with openings in my field?
- Can you suggest what other positions might match my skills and background?
- What do you see as the future trends in this industry?
- What skills are employers looking for in this particular industry?
- Can you provide me with three to four names of other people who might be willing to speak with me?

Informational Interviewing

Informational interviewing involves speaking with people to find out and get advice about a particular career, industry or organization. The goal of informational interviewing is to find out how to get into your field of interest, industry or organization and what it's like to work in it. Ideally this creates a snowball effect as you ask for addition referrals and introductions. This can be a highly effective way to build your networking with influential individuals in the field, industry or organization that you are targeting.

Identify 3 people that you will connect with this week to schedule and information interview. Remember to focus on people who can provide useful information about a field, industry or organization that you are targeting.

Initiating an Informational Interview

Often, individuals have questions about how to initiate a networking conversation. It is important to both introduce yourself and state what kind of information you are seeking. There are many things you can say to introduce yourself to someone and present yourself in a positive light.

Tips for Making an Informational Interview Request

- Identify yourself and indicate the person who referred you.
- State the purpose of your call and how the contact can be of assistance.
- Give a 1-minute statement on your background.
- Assure the person that you are not asking him or her for a job but just looking for information.
- Give the contact an estimate of how long the interview will last. Keep it brief – suggest 20 minutes. This means you need to be organized and concise.
- Ask the person whether he or she would prefer to meet in person, by phone or video. If possible, try to meet face-to-face.
- Schedule a time for the conversation which is convenient for the contact even if it means you need to shuffle other commitments.
- Offer to take the person for coffee if he or she would prefer to meet off the premises or outside of work hours.
- Thank the referral for their time and willingness to meet with you.

Being Useful to Your Network

Networking is a two-way street. People are generally happy to help you out but it is always helpful to have deposited something in the relationship bank. To that end, you want to:

- Thank associates who have referred you
- Nurture your network, don't just show up when you need something
- Attend networking events and social gatherings
- Send out articles of interest to those in your network
- Congratulate anyone in your network who receives a promotion, award, etc.
- Extend special invitations that you know others will appreciate
- Offer information to others as much as they provide it to you
- Keep notes on those you meet
- Know your contacts – remembering spouse names, family status, hobbies etc. can make initiating conversation much easier.
- Be willing to take the time to have networking meetings, make introductions and referrals as appropriate.

