OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

NETWORKING

You have a great new interview outfit and a winning resume. You’ve worked hard to investigate possible employers and spent hours sifting through job listings in your field of interest. You’ve sent our scores of resumes without as much as a nibble from prospective employers. Worse yet, you’re running out of ideas and enthusiasm. What’s wrong? Many people become so intent on their job searches that they end up conducting them in a vacuum. Networking is one of the most important components of career research and of the job search. The more people you know, the more information you gather, and the more you’re out there, the better equipped you will be to find employment.

WHO ARE YOUR CONTACTS?

Even if you’re starting with very few connections, you can network successfully. Most people focus their networking on those people immediately surrounding them. “Well, my mother or uncle or cousin doesn’t know anyone in my field so I’m sunk.” The trick is to delve beyond that first layer of contacts and to use your imagination. Say you’re pursuing a career in the music industry: You may know someone who works at your college’s radio station. Although this person probably won’t be your contact with the president of Sony BMG, he or she may know someone at an independent label who has been in contact with him or her to promote local bands. In checking out your college alumni directory, you may discover an alumnus who’s an entertainment lawyer. Although he doesn’t work at a record label, he may very well have contacts in the field. If you think creatively, networking contacts can be found in many different places. Just learn to think outside the box and talk to those you come in contact with in your daily routine. Here’s a list of possible resources to start your networking.

FAMILY/EXTENDED FAMILY

- Parents
- Guardians
- Siblings
- Grandparents
- Aunts
- Uncles
- Cousins

FRIENDS/ACQUAINTANCES

- Friends of friends
- Parents of friends
- People in your apartment building or neighborhood

CO-WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS, PAST AND PRESENT

Past and present colleagues can be good sources of networking information, even if they are in a seemingly unrelated field.

TEACHERS AND PROFESSORS, PAST AND PRESENT

Educators can be excellent sources for contacts, particularly if you have had a good rapport with them.

COLLEGE ALUMNI

In addition to keeping listings of alumni, many schools organize alumni/ae receptions throughout the year, so it’s always wise to inquire about such opportunities when contacting your alma mater. Most schools have their graduates categorized by career area and geographic location, so if you’re considering moving to another city or state, find out if there are other alums in the area.

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This could include career counselors, deans and college activities officers.

People who have common interests and participate in common activities often have great information to share with one another.

Churches, temples, and other religious organizations can be rich resources that offer a wide array of contacts in a variety of career fields.

You may also want to contact the local chamber of commerce for a list of employers in your geographic area of interest.

Maybe you read an article about a successful civil engineer in your area, and you’re interested in entering the field. Write that person a letter. Whether someone enjoys the attention and recognition or is simply interested in helping you out, you could benefit from initiating contact.

Organizations such as the American Medical Association, the American Association of University Women, the NAACP and the Asian American Journalists Association often keep lists of members arranged by geographic location.

The local phone book for your desired destination is an excellent source of information. Phone books for most major American cities can be found at branches of the public library.

Check out local papers to get acquainted with key players and organizations, career fair listings, and local job listings.

With nonprofit fairs, business/financial service fairs, and minority career fairs making up but a few of the career fairs out there, these offer frequent opportunities to network with a large number of people without a lot of running around.

The most effective way to network is by conducting informational interviews. See the handout on Informational Interviewing more information.


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