

VirtualJobCoach

Your Personal Job-Search Assistant



Networking

The Key To A Successful Job Search

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	GATHERING INFORMATION	4
3	I-NETWORKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE	5
3.1	WHAT IS IT?.....	5
3.2	HOW TO I-NETWORK.....	6
3.3	I-NETIQUETTE.....	7
3.3.1	<i>Rules</i>	7
3.3.2	<i>Advantages of I-Networking</i>	7
3.3.3	<i>Disadvantages of I-Networking</i>	7
4	CREATING THE MESSAGE	9
4.1	30 SECOND (ELEVATOR).....	9
4.2	THE GENERIC 2 MINUTE PITCH.....	9
4.3	THE FOCUSED 2 MINUTE PITCH.....	10
5	HOW TO MAKE CONTACT	11
5.1	PLAN THE INITIAL CONTACT:.....	11
5.2	PLAN THE MEETING.....	11
6	NETWORKING MEETINGS	13
7	MEETING ETIQUETTE	15
8	QUESTIONS	16
9	ORGANIZED EVENTS	17
9.1	STRUCTURED NETWORKING.....	17
9.2	WORKING JOB FAIRS.....	17
10	TO YOUR SUCCESS	18

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

1 Introduction

Let us start with a word of thanks, on behalf of all men, to the inventors of the GPS systems. This is one area where we do not have to ask for directions or help anymore. Networking on the other hand makes many of us feel uncomfortable. Sometimes it's because we're placed in a vulnerable position, or maybe it's because we have the wrong idea about what networking is, and is not.

Networking can be best thought of as a series of interactions between you and other people that move your job search or career goals forward. Networking is not just for those in job search mode but also, and as importantly, for those who are looking to the future. 85% to 95% of new job opportunities are in some way directly related to networking. A basic rule of networking that should be rigorously applied is "Offer to help others as much as you expect others to help you."

Networking is not making cold calls to strangers. Networking is talking with people who have expressed an interest in helping you move forward. Networking is talking to someone who is visiting your office, networking is chatting with someone in the vet's office. Networking is communication and building relationships. In fact, if you're thinking "*but this is what I do everyday anyway*", then you're absolutely correct!

The goal of networking in the job search world is to find that person who is in a position to give you the next exciting position, and everything you do needs to be focused on expanding your network until you find The Right One, remember we are not asking for help we are asking for advice.

The majority of men, less so women, seem not to be biologically attuned to the concept of networking. I am not sure if it is because we (men) think we may appear weak if we ask someone for advice or if there is some deeper seated explanation. Whatever your reason for hesitating, this guide has been written to help you with your networking and through it's step by step approach, remove those fears you have. And as many of my clients have said, once you have started it is not as bad as you thought it would be.

Even today in the tough times we're facing, people are still landing in new positions and more often than not these are unadvertised. They achieve this through **Networking**.

[VirtualJobCoach](#) is uniquely designed to help you with this exercise so your first task is to create an account. If you have already done this then watch the [video](#) that explains the best method of using your contacts inside the application.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

2 Gathering Information

If this is the first time you're consciously going to network, you need to start somewhere. So let's begin right at the beginning.

Your first step needs to be to build a list of all the people you already know. Some of the best sources to get names for your list of contacts include:

- ❖ Friends
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Current and previous work colleagues
- ❖ School/College contacts
- ❖ Alumni associations
- ❖ Neighbors
- ❖ Spouse's friends
- ❖ Accounts
- ❖ Lawyers
- ❖ Politicians
- ❖ Doctors
- ❖ LinkedIn
- ❖ MySpace
- ❖ Facebook
- ❖ Twitter
- ❖ Members of your religious affiliation
- ❖ Members of your gym
- ❖ Everyone you have ever had contact with in a professional or work environment
- ❖ And so the list goes on...

In short, no one should be excluded from your networking activities.

Gather the information as list first, you'll soon want to keep it in an organized fashion and make sure that you have the ability to keep track of who you have spoken with, who you need to call, who introduced you to who and any next steps in terms of meetings. [VirtualJobCoach](#) can help you with all of these functions.

3 I-Networking in the Digital Age

3.1 *What is it?*

I-Networking in the digital age is a constantly moving target with, it seems, new opportunities (and dangers) arriving each week. As you start and continue to build your network you will recognize that there are few places better to expand your connections than online.

- ❖ LinkedIn
- ❖ Plaxo
- ❖ Naymz
- ❖ Xobni
- ❖ ecadamey
- ❖ Xing
- ❖ Perfect Networker
- ❖ Networking For Professionals
- ❖ Jigsaw
- ❖ Spoke
- ❖ VirtualJobCoach
- ❖ Doostang
- ❖ Facebook
- ❖ PartnerUp
- ❖ Trufina
- ❖ Twitter

These are some of the available Internet Business and Social Networking websites, each with a different purpose. Almost all of these sites have the facility for you to complete a profile that shows the world who you are. One of the problems about being unemployed is you are one of several million people trying to get noticed. Setting up a full profile helps recruiters “find” you, and for them to know you’re “a good qualified candidate. You need to put as much (if not more) care and attention into creating your profile since once written it’s almost impossible to erase words from the internet.

In completing your profile make sure all of the appropriate boxes are ticked and completed, these include experience, education and recommendations where appropriate. Most of the sites listed above have online Alumni groups for you to join, also make the best use of any professional associations or business interest groups, especially those groups who represent the type of position you’re looking for.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

One final word of caution, even though the internet is vast, it's becoming much easier to find "things" about people. You're building your online identity or I-Brand, and anything you need to make sure there is nothing out there to spoil it. Make sure that your past internet postings/pictures are as "cleaned up" as possible, if someone else has the "incriminating/embarrassing/unflattering" information about you, ask them to remove it.

When you're prepared and ready then reach out to old and new friends and acquaintances to build your network.

3.2 How to I-Network

Let's look at a few of the sites in more detail and see how they can best help us in our search.

LinkedIn – One of the older and more reputable business networking sites. In the early days it was available by invitation only but today anyone can create an account. There are three primary sides to LinkedIn;

- ❖ Its use by corporate recruiters who are "surfing", looking for appropriate candidates.
- ❖ Building your network, identifying people you have worked with or some connection with in the past.
- ❖ Hunting or identifying potential connections in "target" organizations. Using your connections to introduce you to others and so make that one important link.

Facebook – Facebook is one of the early social networking sites that has grown to international recognition. Facebook has seen a tremendous growth over the last few years with some of the most significant growth in those over 35 years old.

- ❖ Make a decision, is this personal or business?
- ❖ If business is your choice then make sure that your profile is appropriate and all pictures, comments are those that you would want a prospective employer to see.
- ❖ Build content suitable to your career aspirations and invite relationships that build a good network.
- ❖ Join all available professional groups.
- ❖ Remember that nothing is very private.

Plaxo – Was originally designed as an application that would synchronize your Outlook address book with other members in such a way as to obviate the need to notify people of your change of email address or other contact data.

Subsequently Plaxo has changed to more of a networking environment where they have created an online space that is a cross between Facebook and

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

LinkedIn with the ability to post pictures, create groups and search for people within the application.

Choose the applications you use carefully and set up your profile. Regular updates to the sites make sure that your profile often rises to the top, making you (and why you're the best candidate for the job) more visible and findable.

3.3 I-Netiquette

When first starting your networking take time to learn the rules. Ensure you understand the "Dos and Don'ts". It's very easy to make acquaintances on the Internet, some of which can turn into real networking opportunities. As has been said many times networking through the Internet is a great option for shy people.

3.3.1 Rules

- ❖ As in real life don't ask someone if they know about a job unless you are participating in a group that is specifically set up for that purpose, e.g. Recruitment forum.
- ❖ When you talk to people in a networking meeting you normally follow the rule "You were born with two ears and one mouth, so you can listen twice as much as you talk". Online is no exception, make sure you know what you are talking about before you commit fingers to keyboard.
- ❖ Be prepared for some rejection, not everyone you reach out to will be as open or available to network with you.
- ❖ You're reputation is incredibly important, you need to protect it.

As we start building our contacts, be aware your words are all someone sees and is what you're judged on.

3.3.2 Advantages of I-Networking

- ❖ You become more visible (and findable).
- ❖ You "market yourself and your skills" to those who are searching for people like you.
- ❖ Recruiters are constantly scanning the profiles for qualified candidates.
- ❖ Easy to connect, people who sign up are making a commitment to network.
- ❖ Tons of associations, professional and special interest groups ready to offer a way to connect and communicate.
- ❖ Spend as much time as you feel necessary and move among groups as time allows.
- ❖ You substantially increase your reach and therefore the possible opportunities.

3.3.3 Disadvantages of I-Networking

- ❖ People pay just as much attention to bad manners online as they do face to face.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

- ❖ Your words count, not only that but they hang around for a long time afterwards.
- ❖ You can get lost in networking and forgetting the ultimate goal.
- ❖ Does require some ongoing effort to keep your I-Brand fresh.
- ❖ Not everyone you reach out to will be open to your request.

4 Creating the Message

The message is usually driven by someone asking you the question “Tell me about yourself” or something along those lines.

There are different approaches to developing and delivering your pitch depending on where you are and who your audience is. At a minimum there are three versions, the first is a basic 30 second pitch that is generic and focuses on your unique selling position, the second is a longer one and a half to two minute pitch that contains a more detailed history and positioning, the final pitch is one delivered at an interview where you know their requirements and you can focus your value proposition.

Remember that the message is all about what you can bring to the table not about what you have done.

4.1 30 Second (Elevator)

There is any number of environments where this pitch comes into its own. In general you have a very short space of time to get across your value. And you need to be focused on making a great impression.

Your immediate words need to give your audience a clear picture of your value and should leave them thinking either that was interesting or how can I learn more?

Think about describing your skill rather than your job title, are you a Landscape Gardener or do you turn the world green? Are you an IRS Agent or A government fund raiser? These are two common examples that have grown into common usage.

Think about the best way of describing your value to an employer in 30 seconds or less.

4.2 The Generic 2 Minute Pitch

A longer version of the previous pitch which contains more value statements and talks more about your history and the organizations you have worked for.

Think about your resume and the words you have used to describe yourself, make sure how you describe yourself accurately reflects what your goal is. You would not for example talk about being in the Energy business when in fact you are a Controller; rather you are a Controller who happens to have extensive experience in the field of Power Generation.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

Use stories to demonstrate how you have delivered value to previous or your current employer.

4.3 The Focused 2 Minute Pitch

At this stage we have a targeted job description and we have been offered either a telephone or face to face interview.

Our goal now is to analyze the requirements and pitch our skills and capabilities directly against it. If they are looking for a Controller with a minimum of 3 years experience in a publicly traded company and you can say it your opening statement may be “I am a Controller with more than 5 years experience in publicly traded companies.”

You will use specific examples of how you meet the bill and how you bring value to the table. Remember that just like crafting your resume to leave people begging for more so your 2 minute pitch should leave them saying “wow”.

5 How to make contact

5.1 *Plan the initial contact:*

The way you'll approach each person will be different based on your relationship with them. Some you'll feel comfortable to just pick up the phone and call them, others you may prefer to send an email or letter to make the initial contact.

If you've been given the name of a new person to connect with, it's a good idea to have the person who referred you to "warm" the contact first. "**Warming**" the contact lets the contact know that their name has been shared with someone, and that person – you, will be contacting them. This way when you reach out to a new contact, they will be prepared for your call or email and are more likely to accept it or respond to it.

Making an initial contact by phone will go smoothly if you plan out what you want to achieve and have a prepared script for three possible situations.

1. Have a script ready if the other person does not answer and you get their voicemail.
2. If they answer but can't take the call there and then and you need to set up a time to speak.
3. Finally have your call plan if they answer and are happy to take the call there and then.

For emails and letters, take the same approach and plan out:

1. What you want to say.
2. Mention the name of the person who referred you, and
3. End with you taking an action to follow-up by phone.

5.2 *Plan the Meeting*

For each interaction, that isn't purely social, it's good to have a plan for what you want to accomplish, which will define how you'll approach each opportunity. If you're meeting in person or talking over the phone, plan that interaction as well. Make sure you stick to what you said you were going to talk about, and don't take more of the other persons time than you requested.

1. Use the **HAIR** approach; think about how you can **H**elp each other, share **A**dvice and **I**nformation, and share at least two **R**eferrals.
2. Have some ice-breakers ready to start the conversation; you may be nervous about the meeting, and so may the other person, since you called the meeting it's up to you to take control of the meeting and get it started, keeping it on track, and wrapping it up.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

3. Be punctual; plan your trip there to ensure you arrive with time to spare. If this is somewhere you have not been to before, try going there the day or night before to check out the route.
4. Have your elevator pitch memorized and be ready to use it.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

6 Networking Meetings

When thinking about networking meetings it's often easier to hide behind an email or a telephone call but the fun of networking appears when you can sit face to face with an individual or in a group session where you're exchanging stories, ideas and contacts. I recognize there are limitations imposed by geography and availability can limit face to face contact but when working with my outplacement clients I encourage it whenever possible.

It is important you set expectations both in your own mind and with the person you're meeting. The purpose of networking meetings is to gain access in one form or another to information. Having said that, there are normally 2 ways in which someone can help you, firstly as a resource for information about the business or market sector; or secondly as referral point for other contacts. Asking for information the contact is unable to provide is inappropriate and embarrassing. It can also lead to the loss of a valuable networking contact.

When setting up a meeting, if possible email the individual letting them know you will be calling, use the name of the person referring you if appropriate and then follow up with a telephone call to cement the meeting time and place. If necessary the meeting can take place via the telephone or email but remember extra care will be needed to make sure you get the best results.

Once the meeting is agreed, give them time to prepare and send an agenda, maybe a copy of your Marketing letter (or resume) in advance, also include a list of your target companies. Remember to take clean printed copies of this information with you as well.

Always take the time to reconfirm your meeting the day before and know how much time it'll take you to get to the meeting – you don't want to be late! Please try to avoid meetings over meals; this often leads to disappointment later on.

Having organized the meeting, set the expectations and prepared what next? Next is the meeting itself, and here we have some basic rules to follow so that we come out the other side with a successful outcome.

Allow yourself to be flexible even though you have an agreed agenda and make sure, as far as possible, you stay within the agreed timeframe. This is more important where you're meeting someone for the first time rather than with an existing contact or friend.

Remember you are never asking for a job rather you are always asking for advice and, most importantly, additional people you can be referred to. You will also offer to provide assistance to your contact. Make sure when you leave the

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

meeting you've set up a process where you can follow up with them and continue to build the relationship. Remember everyone you meet is another person in your network, and the relationship will need to be developed.

The meeting is over and you have left, you've emailed your contact and said Thank You. You've also contacted the person who referred you and thanked them as well.

7 Meeting Etiquette

You are sitting in your host's office and ready to talk (and listen), here are some tips to help smooth the event and prevent an unnecessary gaffe:

- ❖ Turn off your cell phone; your host is busy and has set aside some time to help you out, the last thing they want to hear is you talking on your cell phone.
- ❖ Be prepared; make sure that you take copies of your resume and other documents printed on good quality paper. Also take copies on a USB drive just in case.
- ❖ Wear appropriate attire; you may know that day to day attire at the office you're visiting is very informal but in your case something more upscale is a better choice. Business casual is a minimum requirement; after all you don't know who you may end up meeting.
- ❖ Keep to time; Once again, your host's time is valuable, you have maybe asked for 20 minutes, don't take more unless your host offers it.
- ❖ Be respectful of your host; your host is giving you time and advice, your purpose is clear (you are there to network) and you will ask for referrals and/or additional information so be careful as to how far you stretch your requests.
- ❖ Offer reciprocal help; no networking contact should be made without offering help and assistance. People in your network will judge you based on your actions and you do not want to be seen as a 'taker' rather as a 'giver'.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

8 Questions

During a networking meeting it can sometimes be awkward and silences ensue. Here are some sample questions that can help you fill in the gaps and at the same time earn a good reputation.

- ❖ Do you know of anyone who would be prepared to talk with me?
- ❖ How did you end up in this job/industry?
- ❖ Do you think my resume best fits my goal?
- ❖ What do you like most about your job? This can often be followed up by
- ❖ What would you alter/change?
- ❖ Do you know any industry groups or associations that I should look into?
- ❖ If you were hiring someone what would be the key characteristics/traits/skills that you would be looking for?
- ❖ Do you think I am focusing on the industries best suited to my skills?
- ❖ What are your thoughts as to the industry direction/trend/etc.?
- ❖ What do you see as being the skills in greatest demand at the moment?
- ❖ Are there any skills I am missing and should take additional training for?
- ❖ Here is my target list of companies, are there others that you think I should add?
- ❖ Have you had any funny/unusual incidents happen since you have been in this business?
- ❖ If you could change anything that has happened to you what would it be?
- ❖ In the event I come across one that I could refer to you, can you describe your perfect customer?

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

9 Organized Events

9.1 *Structured networking*

Networking a room can be intimidating, especially if you don't know anyone and have never been in this position. Below are some simple ideas that can help you overcome nervousness.

- ❖ Arrive a little early; often organizers will arrange a session for first time attendees where you have the opportunity to meet others in the same position.
- ❖ Have both your 30 second (elevator) and 2 minute drill practiced and ready.
- ❖ Have copies of your resume/profile available.
- ❖ Do keep track of who you meet, take some cards with you, low cost business cards are available through Vista Print or Overnight Prints.
- ❖ Always offer to help, remember this is as much about giving as taking.
- ❖ Ask questions, people normally will talk about themselves and this provides an opportunity for you to learn.
- ❖ Sometimes organizers will provide a list of attendees, this can be very useful if made available.
- ❖ Never try to sell something at a networking meeting.
- ❖ Be careful what you say, you never know who knows who. This can also work to your advantage if you can identify a common acquaintance

9.2 *Working Job Fairs*

Preparation is the key to having a successful time at any job fair. There are both practical and psychological aspects to this activity.

- ❖ Have reasonable expectations.
- ❖ There are going to be a lot of people at almost every event so get there early.
- ❖ Bring a sufficient quantity of printed resumes and business cards.
- ❖ Try and identify organizations that you will be targeting.
- ❖ Collect business cards
- ❖ Have your "pitch" ready
- ❖ Dress for the event, this is a professional meeting, not a visit to a local bar.
- ❖ Get rest beforehand and be prepared to stand in line.
- ❖ Bring your PDA/Calendar
- ❖ Try to avoid discussing salary expectations
- ❖ Follow up with emails to each person you met and complete any other action items you have agreed.

Networking - The Key To A Successful Job Search

10 To Your Success

We have discussed the theory and the practice to being successful at networking, either face to face or online. Below are 7 steps to getting started and being focused.

- Create your account at [VirtualJobCoach](#)
- Create your list of network contacts
- Create online accounts at LinkedIn, etc.
- Create your “pitches”
- Build your network
- Attend Job Fairs and Networking groups
- Network, Network, Network and Network