



## Networking for Job Hunters

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Many job seekers think that they will have no problem finding a job using the myriad of job boards to respond to ads and post their resume for hiring managers' consideration. **This couldn't be farther from the truth.** It's more likely their resumes will get lost in cyberspace, and they will spend several weeks spinning their wheels, not realizing their efforts are in vain. While I feel you should respond to jobs on job boards / company web sites, and work with recruiters (of course I do), the best way to find a job has been and always will be NETWORKING.

With the advent of Web 2.0, your networking opportunities have grown considerably. The Internet is a marvelous tool, but it must be used correctly. Technology has greatly enhanced our ability to connect, but it's still old school networking skills that land job seekers that next great career move. "It's not what you know, it's who you know," is a perennial truth no matter whether you use a tin can and a string or a Blackberry to contact them.

So let's talk about networking.

Networking brings to mind a 6 am donut meeting in a hotel where everyone walks around shaking each others' hands and passing out business cards. It's actually much broader than that.

A good way to immediately grow a network is to get involved in the community. There are endless groups, clubs and volunteer organizations, providing the chance for people to meet who may otherwise not. The old school networking has you joining these groups. You now also have the on-line options. The social media also provide a terrific resource for joining with like minded people on any topic from sewing to stock car racing. Check out Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Yahoo Groups for some of the more popular venues. There is plenty of free information on how to use these sites on Google.

Another way to network is to re-connect with past classmates and former co-workers. Alumni lists and industry directories can help track down people who haven't been contacted for awhile. LinkedIn is an excellent way of networking with business contacts and former co-workers. Facebook has recently reached critical mass and is an excellent way to contact people from the past and people you know personally. What started as a tool for Harvard classmates has mushroomed to include suburban housewives, retired grandpas, and everyone in between.

If it is possible to meet with any of these people for coffee or lunch, that is a great way to build relationship. There are also many organized events in every community listed at the chamber of commerce.

One of the most proven ways of making new contacts is to ask for referrals. Connecting two people through a third person builds immediate rapport and trust. Everyone is familiar with Six Degrees of Separation, so take that seriously. The more connected you are, the better. Who knows who else is connected to that person? The idea is to keep drilling down and allow the connections to reach critical mass.

The most important aspect of networking is *multiple contacts*. Meeting a person one time and never following-up is not really networking. It's meeting a new person! Studies show it takes five or six contacts with someone to remember them. A good, innocuous way to follow-up may be to drop them an e-mail or better yet a hand written note and include a business card. If possible, invite them to another networking event. Or, see if you can add them to your Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter.

Relationships take time, so a network will not grow overnight. The key to growth is consistency rather than networking in spurts. It is important for a job seeker to spend time every day networking and if you are unemployed you should spend HOURS every day on networking. With consistent effort, networks grow exponentially and with the new technology and the right savvy, more and more people are landing jobs that involve making a living doing what they love.

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