

Network to Work Meeting

February 2018

RESOURCE MATERIALS – *NETWORKING AND THE JOB SEARCH*

All About Networking

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An essential activity for being successful in your job search is networking. When networking, you are making contacts and building relationships that can lead to jobs or other work-related opportunities.

Thoughtful networking gives you a focused way to talk to people about your job search. Through the use of your personal, professional or family contacts, networking can provide you with job leads, referrals to helpful contacts, information about companies or career fields, an “in” at a company of interest, and overall general support.

Research shows that employers value personal referrals above other ways of identifying candidates for a position. Therefore, meeting people and impressing them can make all the difference.

At its best, networking is about building relationships. It’s not so much asking for help as it is about people helping one another by sharing useful information and resources. Therefore, for you as a networker, it’s important to know what you have to offer in terms of skills, knowledge and resources.

The good news for older job seekers is that by virtue of more years of work experiences, you generally have an edge over your younger counterparts in terms of the scope of your networks and the skills, knowledge and resources you have to offer. Yet older workers may be less experienced in identifying and using their networking contacts. Furthermore, traditional networking practices of going to professional meetings and handing out business cards are no longer enough to be successful in networking.

Here is some valuable information for the older worker to know when networking:

1. Consider your entire work history. What kind of work have you been good at, and why? With that knowledge, you should be able to clearly say the type of job or company you’re looking for.
2. Connect with **anyone** who likes or cares about you. You never know who'll be talking tomorrow with the person you talk to today. You don't know who your dentist knows or who your brother-in-law knows at work. Furthermore, your “mature” network of connections will have more contacts than younger people.

3. Act like a young person! Overcome any tendency you may have to be reserved when asking about potential contacts or jobs.
4. Consider asking a younger person to mentor you on how the “work world” works today. In return, you can mentor your mentors by offering your own experience.
5. Networking today isn’t your mom-and-pop networking of yesterday. The Internet is key, even for job seekers who did not grow up with it. Business web sites like LinkedIn are good ways to connect with people in your target companies and in your field.
6. After identifying contacts, arrange face-to-face meetings. If the organization where you seek to work is accessible, such as a local business or small company, simply walking in is an effective way to get a brief interview, she adds. "You'll immediately separate yourself out from those who only send paper and electronic resumes," she says.

Presenting Yourself with your Elevator Speech

Whenever you want to present yourself professionally through networking, you should be prepared with your “elevator speech” – which is **a brief, concise message or commercial introducing you** that lasts under a minute. Armed with a good elevator speech, you can be prepared in any opportunity to let others know about yourself, your career goals and the ways they might be of assistance.

The elevator speech can be a very useful and versatile tool in many situations, such as:

- Events designed specifically for networking.
- Casual networking opportunities we encounter nearly every day — attending sporting events, waiting in line at the store, traveling via mass transit, and on and on.
- Career or job fairs.
- Cold calls to employers.
- Voicemail messages.
- Interview introductions.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when writing your elevator speech:

1. People have short attention spans, so keep it short, limited to a few sentences about you and your interests.
2. Be clear about your employment goals. What are you interested in? What kind of work do you want to do?
3. Focus more on who you are and what you offer, especially as it relates to the listener. Mention strengths and achievements – short and sweet.
4. Frame it in terms of a problem you solve rather than what you do.

- Don't say "I'm a customer service specialist"; instead say "I communicate with customers and keep them happy throughout their experience."
5. Be quirky or unexpected.
 - Include something that makes you unique or stand out.
 - If you feel like your elevator pitch is a little dry, try adding a memorable personal detail for some flair, such as "I hold the speed record in my spin class."
 6. Connect and engage with questions that tie your experience to the listener:
 - "Have you ever enjoyed a delicious jam spread on a warm piece of toast? It was my job to make sure that spread was perfectly mixed and safely packed for you to enjoy."
 - Statements like these can turn the speech quickly into a conversation.
 7. Tweak the speech based on your audience – it's only helpful if it makes sense.
 8. Take it slowly – don't rush.
 9. Finally, make it memorable and sincere. Show your personality. Be warm, friendly, confident and enthusiastic. Smile and maintain eye contact.

Here's a template for writing your Elevator Speech:

Let's start with an example of an elevator speech:

"Hello, my name is Mary Jones and I'm a school library genie. Have you ever gone into a library and you either can't find your desired book or don't know what book you want? I'm the smiling presence who makes sure you can always find the book you want."

"I'm completing an extensive training program in the field of customer service. I'm greatly enjoying my current experience working in a school library serving children, teachers and parents and I've been recognized for the compassion, kindness and organizational skill that I've brought to this role. I'm looking to continue working in customer service in a similar setting and I'm wondering if you could recommend any organizations I might consider or people I should talk to?"

As you can see, this speech in essence answers the question, "Tell me about yourself", or "What do you do?" Let's break it down and look at its elements:

1. **Name:**

"Hello, my name is Mary Jones"

- a. "Hi, I'm (write your **name**)"
- b. **Don't** introduce yourself (to a stranger) as a job seeker. If they have no job to offer, they will begin to tune out thinking they can't help you.

2. **Hook:**

"I'm a library genie. Have you ever gone into a library and you either can't find your desired book or don't know what book you want? I'm the smiling presence who makes sure you can always find the book you want."

- a. This is the quirky or engaging way of sharing the work you do, what you offer, the contributions you can make or problems you can solve.

- b. It can be in the form of a question that relates to the listener's experience and can be answered by saying what you do.
 - i. Here's another example:
"Have you ever bought something that included an incomprehensible user manual? I'm the person on the other end of your phone call helping to make your item user friendly."

3. Your most recent relevant experience and a success, achievement or skills used:

"I'm completing an extensive training program in the field of customer service. I'm greatly enjoying my current experience working in a school library serving children, teachers and parents and I've been recognized for the compassion, kindness and organizational skill that I've brought to this role."

4. Target role you are looking for:

"I'm looking to continue working in customer service in a similar setting."

5. Your "ask" / request for assistance:

I'm wondering if you could recommend any organizations I might consider or people I should talk to."

- a. Other examples: "I'm wondering if you could . . .
 - *Tell me what it's like to work at your company*
 - *Tell me what it's like to work in this field*
 - *Tell me any ideas you might have for pursuing opportunities (in your company / in this field)*
 - *Recommend companies that might be appropriate for me.*
 - *Give me any advice on how I might break into this field."*

Other Pointers for Networking Success

1. Keep track of your contacts
 - a. Keep detailed records – who, what, when, where, next steps
 - b. Ask permission from your contact who is making any recommendation or referral to use his or her name.
2. Expand your networking horizons:
 - a. Start with those you know well
 - b. Move on to acquaintances, and referrals
 - c. Consider these common sources:
 - Alumni organizations.
 - Colleagues and friends of family members.
 - Former (or current) classmates.

- Community job clubs.
- Former employers, including supervisors and coworkers.
- Friends: Local and out-of-town.
- Hobby groups: Book clubs, gardening, model trains, quilting, etc.
- Members of clubs: Health club, softball team, hiking club.
- Members of your church, temple, synagogue or mosque. (Some religious organizations also sponsor job search groups.)
- Military chums.
- Neighbors: Current and past.
- Participants in trade shows, seminars or workshops you've attended.
- Political groups.
- Professional associations.
- Professionals: Attorneys, accountants, doctors, dentists, insurance agents, pharmacists, veterinarians.
- Relatives: Local and out-of-town.
- Service or fraternal organizations and groups: Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks.
- Service providers: Travel agents, stockbrokers, realtors.
- Volunteer associations: Past and present.

3. Finally, don't forget to follow up with a written "thank you" and keep folks updated on your progress.

Adapted from:

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Elevator Speech Do's and Don'ts, by Katharine Hansen, Ph.D.
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