

## Network to Work Meeting

April 2021

### RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *NETWORKING AND THE JOB SEARCH*

## All About Networking

### What is Networking?

A crucial part of a successful job search is networking. Networking is simply talking with people and expanding your circle of connections for the purpose of advancing your employment goals. It is a way to learn about new opportunities and possibilities through connecting with others –people you know well, acquaintances, and new people you’ve never met before. Through them you can learn about job leads, get referrals to others who may help in your job search, learn about a particular company or career field, or even get an “in” at a company.

Networking isn’t one sided, however. When done right, networking is about two people helping one another by sharing resources and information. It is about building mutually-beneficial new relationships and re-invigorating existing ones. When you network, you are looking to gain information to help you in your job search, but at the same time you should be learning about others and giving them information and assistance as well to the extent possible. It’s about helping others as well as helping yourself.

### Why Network?

Since most jobs aren’t advertised, networking is a way to tap into the hidden job market. This increases your chances of obtaining a job. Also, through networking you might be personally introduced to a hiring manager, which will give you an advantage over the others in a large pile of applicants. Employers value personal referrals above other ways of identifying candidates.

### The Networking Conversation

Networking is getting to know people, and telling them about yourself, your skills, knowledge and interests. It is about asking for assistance and offering assistance. Therefore, it is helpful to go into a networking conversation with a prepared and brief “elevator speech” that concisely tells a bit about you, your skills and what you’re looking for. Be sure to customize it for each meeting because it will

be different depending upon what you are seeking - a referral vs. information about a job vs. a personal introduction, etc. Don't be shy about asking for what you need. People feel good when they can help another, so the more specific you can be about how they can help, the better.

Networking conversations can happen at group events such as job fairs, or in one on one conversations with friends and colleagues. Group events can be intimidating if you put pressure on yourself to find a job in that moment. The real goal of a networking interaction is to make a genuine connection with another person as part of building a longer-term relationship. With this as your goal, it is easier to have a more comfortable interaction and conduct a pleasant conversation.

## **Here is a Five-Step Guide to Effective Networking**

### **1. Introduce Yourself:**

How you introduce yourself determines the first impression you make. So speak up and clearly, make eye contact and don't rush. Use good posture and smile; this will project confidence even if you don't feel it, and will help put the other person at ease.

Repeat the other person's name a few times to lock it into your brain.

### **2. Ask Questions:**

Be genuinely curious about the other person. Find out what the other person is interested in and ask questions about that.

When you are meeting one-on-one with a friend, colleague or professional referral, you should ask open ended questions like, "How did you get where you are?" or "What fascinates you about your work or industry?"; "What do you find exciting or interesting about your role?"

If you are at a networking event and attempting to start up a conversation with a stranger, consider the questions below.

Make an effort to remember things like where the person lives, their childrens' or pets' names, hobbies, etc.

### **3. Make a Connection:**

Try to find something you have in common – the weather, a similar commute, a sport or team, etc. This can help reduce the apprehension of meeting a new person. Connecting like this makes the other person more interested in engaging and talking with you.

You could also take the approach of making the individual feel good by paying him or her a unique and genuine compliment.

4. Explain what you do:

Talk about who you help and how you do it. Be concise but with enough information to prompt follow up questions.

5. Exit gracefully:

If the conversation went well, exchange cards if you have them, and make a plan to stay in touch. A good exit line is, "It was great chatting with you. I'm going to try to meet a few more people as well. Hope you enjoy your afternoon."

## Some Great Networking Conversation Starters

Walking up to a stranger in a group and trying to start a conversation can be daunting. Here are some helpful conversation starters that can open the door for a genuine and interesting conversation:

1. *"Interesting name – how did your parents think of it? Is there a story behind it?"*
2. *"How long have you lived here? Do you remember the first day you landed here?"*
3. *"Where do you come from and where does your family live?"*
4. *(If there's food), "I can't stop eating these meatballs – have you tried them?"*
5. *"I'm pretty overwhelmed by all of the information presented today. Is there one nugget that has really resonated with you?"*
6. *"What a beautiful venue. Have you been here before?"*
7. *"What do you think about \_\_\_\_?" (Insert a topic that relates to the event or person)*
8. *"Wow, I just can believe all the crazy news headlines today. What a week!"*
9. *"Was it challenging for you to get here today?"*
10. *"Did you catch the game last night?"*
11. *"Man, these networking events can be so crazy. Do you mind if I join you over here where it is a little quieter?"*
12. *"Since we're both here at the (buffet, bar, waiting room), I feel I should introduce myself. I'm (name)."*
13. *"So, what do you do?"*
14. *"What's your story?"*
15. And if you are trying to break into an active conversation, try: *"Do you mind if I join you?"*  
Then introduce yourself. *"What brought you here?" "How do you all know each other?"*

## 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:
    - Friends: local and out-of-town.
    - Relatives: local and out-of-town.
    - Colleagues and friends of family members and friends.
    - Former (or current) classmates.
    - Community job clubs.
    - Former employers, including supervisors and coworkers.
    - Members of your church, temple, synagogue or mosque. (Some religious organizations also sponsor job search groups.)
    - Neighbors: Current and past.
    - Professionals and service providers you use.
    - 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:

A Five-Step Guide to Effective Networking, by Monisha Toteja, CEO of Dynamic Speaking LLC., 4/11/2019.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/04/11/a-five-step-guide-to-effective-networking/?sh=549344c37887>

30 Brilliant Networking Conversation Starters, by The Muse, 30 Conversation Starters for Successful Networking | The Muse

Build Your Job Search Network, by Linda Wiener, Monster Age Issues Expert  
<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/build-job-search-network>

Networking at 50-Plus, by Dan Woog, Monster Contributing Writer  
<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/networking-at-50-plus>