



Networking 2017



Networking with strangers can be a terrifying experience for many people, especially when it's in-person. What do you say? What if you're awkward? What if you don't make a good first impression?

Don't worry – prepare! Check out these quick tips for being a more confident networker.

1. Know How to Break The Ice

Struggling for ice breakers? Instead of trying to memorize one-liners, keep things simple.

“A simple ‘Hello, my name is ___’ is more than sufficient if said with a smile,” said LoDolce. “Or, my favorite, ‘So, what brings you here?’”

2. Get Warmed up

Don't start batting without a few practice swings! Make sure you talk to a few people before you hit up your main target – it will ease your nerves and make you feel more comfortable.

The moment you walk into the room, just start chatting it up with someone to warm up a bit. Before you know it, you'll feel comfortable chatting up the big time CEO across the room.

3. Be Aware Of Your Body Language

Did you know that 93% of communication is non-verbal? In order to give off a positive impression, we suggest doing the following:

Don't cross your arms

Keep a strong smile all night long

Hold strong eye contact

Feel weird keeping eye contact? Try just staring at the bridge of the other person's nose instead.

4. Ask Great Questions

If you are uncomfortable doing the talking, then ask interesting and thought provoking questions.

Here's an example: "Oh, you're an architect? What's it like building something that you know will be around for hundreds of years?"

5. Have Fun

Whenever you attend a networking event, above all else, focus on having a good time. People will be attracted to your good attitude.

If you're enjoying yourself, people will enjoy your company. And, even if all fails, at least you can say you had a great night!

The 70-20-10 Networking Rule

Frequently we hear from someone who is frustrated about the job search and unenthusiastic about networking. Most people are not natural networkers but at least they are willing to expand their comfort zone in order to be seen and heard in a competitive job market.

However, if the concept of networking sends you into an emotional frenzy and paralyzes you from moving forward, there is hope. Dr. Marla Gottschalk is an Organizational Psychologist and coach and I recently came across a great piece she wrote about the 70-20-10 Networking Rule that may help you move forward.

Here's how:

The First 70%. For this initial segment, choose potential contacts that work within your direct core area or have a similar role. To keep things interesting, choose a few contacts within organizations that are slightly different than yours in terms of customers, size or possibly geographical location. Ask about their work – better yet – inquire about the challenges they are currently facing. You'll undoubtedly gain a new perspective.

The Related 20%. These individuals are working in areas related or “adjacent” to your core area. Look for those individuals who would support roles similar to yours, or those that might hold roles with whom you would interface regularly.

The Outrageous Outliers (The final 10%). Go a little crazy here. Reach out to those engaged in work that simply interests you. Don’t be concerned with their core area as compared to yours – just possess a passion to learn about their area of expertise. Convey your interest early on – ask about articles, posts and books that could help you “cross -pollinate” and apply their knowledge set to your work life.

Some things to remember:

Start slowly, within your own organization or industry. Ask for connection recommendations – and begin branching out from there.

At conferences ask for introductions to those who work in your target areas.

Utilize the social media channels where you feel most comfortable (and where you seem to have the most success). Be sure to explain the motivation behind your request to connect.

Remember, that not everyone will respond. You’ll never know why – but don’t assume the reason is you.

If you connect, plan a 15 minute chat. Explore mutual territory or potential areas of collaboration, and see if you “gel”.

How to Power Up Your Networking Skills [10 Top Tips]

Love it or loath it, networking is a powerful way of learning, giving and relating to others. However sometimes people feel they just don’t know where to start. So here are ten top tips on ways that you can power up your networking skills:

Know who you know – professionals would call this a database but that sounds very formal. Just know who it is that you know. Divide them into those you know well and would recommend you and those you know less well – how can you move one or two of those a month into the first list?

Join a virtual network – spend a couple of hours a month playing. See who you know and see who they know. Build some virtual connections. Find a group that is a proper forum and join the debate. Not every day in every way, just see who you can help.

Find a reason to get in touch – doing charity events and needing sponsorship are great ways of enabling you to connect without talking about work at all!

Join a professional association – play an active role. Not only will you build a profile, extend the number of people you know but you will learn and develop yourself at the same time.

No selling – hang onto the fact that this is about relationships of trust not selling.

Know – know who you want to network with, know what you need to know about them and how you can help them. Be focused and targeted BUT never forget, it is who your network know that might be the critical link for you. So don't be too focused!

Create or rekindle a relationship – When you go to an event – a conference or an association meeting, try to create at least one relationship/re-ignite an old one. You don't have to have ambitions to meet everyone or leave a business card on every plate. But take your business cards and give them away. Get there early, that might sound like a nightmare, but you won't have to walk into a room full of people and the others that are there early may also be looking for someone to talk to.

Know how to leave – If you are talking to someone and you feel you have had enough, turn your body about fifty degrees away from them, that opens up the pair and makes it possible for someone else to join you. Or if you want to leave make sure that they feel valued, offer to call them for a longer discussion or meet them before the next meeting.

Be clear about who you are – Sounds like a no-brainer, but you need to be able to sum up who you are and what you do. It may work if you have a really clear job title or a very high profile organization but if you want to stick in someone's mind, you may need to say more than 'I'm an Assistant Director'. How much more impactful to be 'the guy who makes sure you can drive your car through Watford at 8.30am on a Monday morning' (traffic engineer) or 'I'm the woman who makes sure that the Board don't go to goal for setting illegal budgets.' (accountant).

You may need polite persistence - After you have met someone and got their number, if you need to go and see them, need them to give you information or recommend you, you may need to expect a few delays, cancellations or postponements. Don't take it personally. Put yourself in their shoes and ask how high you would make it as a priority. But on the other hand don't assume they will never help you. Most people like to help others. You need to persist.

Networking is often considered a less than noble activity reserved for the most desperate in their job search. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Networking is one of the most effective and efficient activities in finding your first position.

We network every day. We just don't call it networking.

The reality of the job market is that most positions are never advertised, never actively recruited for, never made known outside of the organization. Yet they continue to be filled. How? By referral of someone internal or external. By the "who-do-you-know" method of job search. That is what we call networking.

Let's understand some of the dynamics behind networking by looking at a practical case example:

Entry level hiring within our company is usually planned a full eight to twelve months in advance of the actual hire date. The first persons made aware of our entry level hiring needs are our local management team. Planning for entry level hiring is part of our annual strategic planning process, and the first step toward potentially filling the positions are internal recommendations from our local management staff. The process goes to the next level when we announce the potential hiring needs to all of our local employees. Next level is a request to our area office. Then a request to corporate, each time seeking qualified candidates who may be "already in the pipeline." If we have not yet identified potential candidates for the positions, we will integrate the positions into our on-campus hiring process. And no,

we typically do not advertise the positions. And college students who have tapped into our internal network often gain job offers before we even begin our on-campus interviewing.

The key driver behind the internal referrals is our Employee Referral Program. Our company, like many large employers, pays a monetary bonus (often several thousand dollars) for employee referrals that are hired. Money is a very effective motivation to drive employee referrals. The “who-do-you-know” network is alive and functioning quite well in the employment marketplace.

Yet most job seekers do not consider themselves to be very well plugged in when it comes to networking. “After all, who do I know who can offer me a job?” Perhaps no one directly, but networking is not about first-level contacts. The key to effective networking is what I call “The Ripple Effect.” Simply stated, The Ripple Effect is similar to what happens when you toss a stone into a pond. The first ripple is the largest ripple, but it is the second and third ripples that further widen the affected surface area. The more stones that break the surface, the greater the amount of the pond that is filled with your ripples. Moral to the story: if you want to give yourself the opportunity to make a ripple in the employment world, you are going to have to toss a few stones into the pond. Otherwise you probably will not even break the surface.

In building your job search network, you will need to develop a list of potential network contacts. Don’t worry about whether they are personally responsible for hiring. It’s not who you know, it’s who they know.

The Purpose of Networking

There are many more uses for networking than just “finding a job.” Networking is an activity that takes place every day of our lives, whether job-related or not. Did you talk to someone at breakfast to review what might be on the upcoming exam? That’s networking. Did you ask a librarian which reference materials would be the best in preparing a term paper? That’s networking. Did you ask friends if they knew of anyone driving home for the weekend? That’s networking.

Networking is already far more active in your life than you might have originally thought. The key to making it effective in your job search is to provide clear focus and direction. Following are several objectives to keep in mind when speaking with others about your job search:

1. To make others aware of your job search and your career focus.
2. To open up additional lines of communication in the job market.
3. To increase your knowledge about a particular career field or industry.
4. To find out more about potential employers.
5. To discover hidden job opportunities.
6. To open up the possibility of creating a job where none currently exists.

To achieve your networking objectives, you need to consider each contact with another human being as a potential opportunity to further expand your network. You will come in contact with other people each and every day. How you integrate that contact into your job search network will greatly determine

your potential for overall success in your job search. And there are hundreds of people out there who are ready and willing to help.

Why Networking Is Important For Your Job Search and Career Development

So many law students and new attorneys think “networking” is a dirty word. It’s selfish, disingenuous, and awkward. It’s dreaded and hated. But the truth is networking is the number one way to get a job and build your career.

Over time, networking is increasingly important. Many of the lawyers I’ve interviewed have never looked for a job after their first few years of practice. Every single opportunity came to them through their network. They were alerted to job openings before jobs were posted—and in some cases were the only candidates considered for the positions, offered jobs that ended up never being posted.

Their networks handed their resumes to decision-makers and put in a good word for them. Their networks pushed their candidacies forward when necessary, calling decision-makers and influencers to vouch for them and proactively address any concerns.

Their networks didn’t just help them get jobs. Networks also helped with securing speaking, publishing, and leadership opportunities within bar and other professional associations, alumni associations, and nonprofit boards. These are important technical skill-building and interpersonal skill-building opportunities that have the additional benefit of making networkers’ networks even larger. Every time a person in these networks was successful, they paid it back—helping others within the network. And so the entire group moved forward together.

Those few lawyers who weren’t growing, nurturing, and using their networks were cut out of these opportunities. Worse, they didn’t even know it.

Because so many of the advances the networking group made happened “behind the scenes” or “off the record.” Bob Non-Networker might know Craig Networker got a new job in the legal department of X Company, but Bob never knew Craig got the job by calling his former girlfriend, Susan Networker, who happened to be a sorority sister of the General Counsel of the company. The GC was so impressed that she never even got around to posting the job. Variations of this scenario happen every day.

It’s easy to write off networking as something only the privileged do. Easy to claim that only the rich or Ivy Leaguers or whomever has access to the benefits of networking. But while it’s true that quantity and quality of networks can vary widely, everyone has access to the benefits of networking. So get out there and start building yours now!

The Law Of 250

The Law of 250 states that every person knows at least 250 other people. For example, if you were to make a list of people to invite to your wedding, you would likely be able to come up with about 250 people. These people might not appear to be outstanding job networking contacts, but many will be able to refer you to others who are.

Networking can be difficult to start, but almost impossible to stop once you have built momentum.

Expanding the concept of the Law of 250 further, each one of your contacts knows an additional 250 people. Yes, there may be some overlap in the 250, especially with a family member or close friend. But the exponential multiplying factor of the additional contacts is what makes networking so potentially valuable in your job search.

Use the Law of 250 as inspiration to contact one more person to enter into your personal network. Although you may not find your next job within your 250, it is very likely that it may exist within someone else's 250.

The Strength of Weak Ties

A corollary to the Law of 250 is the strength of weak ties. As we stated earlier, if one of your 250 is also a family member or close friend, there will likely be some overlap. You may have fifty, one hundred, or even one hundred fifty contacts in common. So actually it is those who are the weakest ties who have the greatest potential for your network. Your weekend tennis partner may share no first-level contacts within your 250, potentially opening you up to a totally new group of people.

It is typically not your first-level contact who may be your eventual Hiring Manager. Typically, you will usually find your hiring contact two or three levels deep.

This is not to discount the importance of the first-level contacts—they are the starting point and will determine your eventual success or failure in networking. But don't be surprised if one day you get a call from a person completely unknown to you—a "friend of a friend of a friend" referring you to a particular company. Cultivate all your contacts and watch them grow!

Whom to Contact in Networking

In short, you should contact everyone you know (your 250) and everyone you do not know personally, but may be able to help with your job search. I realize that seems rather open-ended, so let's start with some specifics.

First, contact your relatives. Not just your immediate family—branch out into the family tree and not just those who are "well-connected in business." Aunt Mabel may play bridge with someone who knows someone who is a Hiring Manager in your field. Remember, it's not necessarily who you know, but who they know.

Everyone knows someone.

Next, contact friends; old and new, high school and college, neighbors and social acquaintances. They might even be a friend of a friend or relative, such as someone who plays tennis or golf with your parents. Spread the word. Some of the best contacts in this group are your college friends who graduated last year. They are already through the job search process and probably have lots of contacts (and free advice).

Next, contact every known entity within your past college or job. Professors, advisors, administrators, counselors, coaches (they are often amazingly well connected!) and anyone else who has ties to your school. Beware that some in this group (especially some of the "academic purist" or "research first" professors) are not nearly as well connected with the real world as they would like you to think, but the guilt factor—they're not wanting to admit this little secret—often pushes them to come up with some

creative ideas. And be sure to reach beyond your circle of known alums to all alumni (recent or past) who are working for target companies, within your target geography, or within your chosen profession.

Also contact past and present employers, coworkers, professional associations, and social contacts through your church, synagogue, club or other organizations. Make it your goal to reach out to your entire list of 250 and then some.

The Advice Request Technique

“But what do I say?” The actual process of networking can seem somewhat mysterious, yet it really isn’t. You are simply making contact with individuals who may be able to assist in your job search. The best method for making contact with others is to ask for advice. You are not asking for an interview, you are asking for advice. By making advice requests, you can tap into a vast network of people who can assist you in your job search.

The Advice Request Technique is the door opener to asking questions of your network contacts. You can preface your question with: “May I ask your advice about something?” Then ask away. The best follow-up question is: “Which are the top five employers that you recommend I contact?” Most people are more than willing to help you. It plays well on the vanity factor of “who they know” and opens the lines of communication for you to ask further questions.

The Ten-Second Sound Bite Technique

In networking with others, always be prepared to present a short sound bite of information about who you are and what you are seeking. Even though Aunt Mabel has known you from birth, she probably doesn’t have a clue as to what type of work you are seeking.

Remember your career mission statement and resume? These will form the basis of your ten-second sound bite. It will be a compound “I have . . .” and “I’m looking for . . .” statement. Following are some examples:

“I have experience and a degree in accounting and I’m looking for a position in the public accounting field in the Chicago area.”

“I have experience in Java programming and a degree in Computer Science. I’m looking for a position with an IT consulting firm.”

“I have experience in newspaper reporting and a degree in Journalism. I’m looking for a position in the newspaper, magazine or book publishing field in Boston.”

Keep it short and sweet. If more detail is required, your contact will ask. The intent of the ten-second sound bite is to give them a tangible statement they will be able to remember. Just as a politician is always seeking a memorable sound bite, you should also seek a sound bite that is specific and memorable.

How to Turn Contacts into Network Contacts

Give it to them straight. Call them (or visit in person), let them know that you are currently searching for a job as a _____ (your Ten Second Sound Bite), ask them if they will help by being part of your personal network, and ask if you can send a copy of your resume to them for their advice and input. After they

receive the resume, call them back to ask for their advice regarding your resume and any recommendations they may have with regard to potential employer contacts. Then utilize some of the following techniques to strengthen and expand your network of contacts.

The Top Five Techniques

Ask your network contacts the following question: “Which are the top five companies that you recommend I contact?” Many people are able to give a “Top Five” (or at least a “Top Three”) list quite easily. After they give you the names, ask them if they have any personal contacts at any of those companies. Keep in mind that over time you will begin to hear some of the same company names being repeated (especially if they are well-known industry leaders). But keep asking for the names of new personal contacts—you can never have enough. After they give you the contact names, selectively consider (depending on your comfort level with the contact) asking if they will contact the company on your behalf. Sometimes your network contact can do some of the work for you! When they make the referrals, be certain that you follow through in a professional manner since they are putting their personal/professional reputation on the line for you. Attaching their name with your name puts a heavy responsibility on you to meet or exceed all expectations.

Just Say the Magic Networking Word

This is an unusual revelation, I must admit. But just saying the magic word “NETWORK” when you talk to potential network contacts takes the conversation (and the productivity of the contact) to a much higher level. I realize it seems rather trivial, so let me explain why this happens.

When you are speaking with potential network contacts, no matter how you state your case, it sounds one-sided (your-sided) and of no benefit to them. But the moment you mention the magic word—“I would like to include you in my network of contacts” or “I would like to network with you”—you have brought the conversation to a new level. Just watch the reaction. All of a sudden, they perk up and become quite attentive to your needs. Why does this happen? Because we have all been trained to network with everyone and everything; yet as a professional society, we often do not recognize networking unless the actual word is used.

I know that sounds belittling to the average intellect in the professional marketplace, but it is reality. “Oh, you want to network with me!” is the typical response—we fail to understand the request until the actual word is used. Summary: when you want to network with someone, always make sure you lead with that magic word.

The Three Degrees of Separation Technique

Just like the game, except in this case you only get three degrees of separation instead of six. First of all, let’s explain why the six degrees of separation typically works: take 250 (your personal network) to the sixth power. I know, it’s higher math, but do the calculation. The answer is 244,140,625,000,000. That’s almost 244 trillion potential contacts in your network at the sixth level of separation and that’s how Kevin Bacon could network with the Pope!

As we talked about in *The Strength of Weak Ties*, the actual number of potential contacts is reduced by overlap, but the formula is still a strong one—the greater the number of levels of separation, the more likely that your network will include your target.

So if you have a specific contact or an employer you would like to target, use your network to reach out to up to three degrees of separation to make a connection. Why three? Because the network connections lose strength as the degrees of separation increase. Three is the practical limit for job search.

Let's take a practical example. Suppose you are interested in working for IBM, but you have no contacts there and they are not recruiting on your campus. Tap into your network, especially those who are professional networkers, such as those in the Career Center (first degree of separation). They may be able to put you in touch with a previous graduate of your school who works at IBM (second degree of separation) and that person may be able to put you in contact with several Hiring Managers at IBM (third degree of separation).

It's actually quite easy to work your way through the degrees of separation. Just like the game, you will be amazed at the connections that can be made.

The One-a-Day Technique

Talking about (or reading about) networking is not networking. Networking is picking up the phone and making the call. It involves getting the phone time (or face time) to make a contact and make a request. You need to be networking consistently in your job search. An initial flurry of calls is not sufficient to keep your network alive and moving forward.

Networking is not a one-time activity. It is an ongoing process which must be cultivated over time.

Set a personal goal to make at least one (remember, this is a minimum) networking contact per day. And voicemail does not count. You need to make at least one live connection per day. Every day. It's really not as difficult as it may seem. Once you begin your networking, you will find that there are contacts that you should be calling on a weekly basis. As your network expands, you will find additional contacts being added to your list almost daily.

Remember, networking is where many of the best jobs are found. The competition is low. The odds are high. Networking is by far your best opportunity for finding your new job. Keep up the momentum by making a minimum of one network connection per day.

The Law of Seven

The Law of Seven is a selling strategy which states that the sale cannot be considered lost until at least seven sales attempts have been made. Or the converse, which states that the sale sometimes will not be made until at least seven exposures to the product are completed. The Law of Seven is followed faithfully by advertisers who continually pummel us over and over with the same ad to ensure that we have reached the saturation point of product recognition.

The same principle applies to networking. It is not enough to contact people once, then cross your fingers and hope something happens. Networking is more than making one call or sending an e-mail. You should regularly give your network contacts updated information on your job search and at the same time find out if they are aware of anything new. If you are actively pursuing employment, it's best to contact them once every two weeks. If you are passively seeking employment, once every one or two months is sufficient. And what if they remain "cold" after seven contacts? Remember that seven is merely the minimum for making full impact. Do not stop making contact unless you are asked to do so. Some of the very best contacts may be the most difficult to fully develop a networking relationship. Use

personal discretion in making contact (one voicemail per week is max unless there is a critical timing need), yet make sure you do your part to keep in touch.

Let your contacts know when their help resulted in positive action. We all appreciate positive feedback, and when you express yours, it helps encourage even greater success in the future.

The Law of Network Gravity

The Law of Network Gravity states: It is always easier to be bumped down in the organization than it is to be bumped up.

What this means is that if you have been referred to the President of the company, but you realize your potential Hiring Manager is the Accounting Manager, you should still contact the President. It may seem intimidating at first, but if you have a personal referral to use, it typically goes quite smoothly. Let the President know who referred you, the purpose of your call, and ask if they could refer you to the proper person within the company.

That's when the magic starts. Why? Because now you have a referral within the company who is in the reporting order of the Hiring Manager. This is as golden as it gets in a job search.

Let's take the example of seeking an accounting position. The President, not likely to have the name of the Hiring Manager, might refer you to the Chief Financial Officer. Onward and downward to the next level below. When you call this person, make sure you state that Mr. /Ms. President asked you to call them. Just watch how quickly your call is accepted. The CFO will take the call and will probably refer you to the Controller, who in turn will refer you to the Accounting Manager. At each level, you continue to "layer on" the name dropping from all the previous levels. By the time you get "bumped down" to the Hiring Manager, you can now state that you are calling based on the recommendation of the President, CFO, and Controller. Wow! Watch the results! Interestingly, they usually do not ask why they recommended you talk with them. So it could even go as far as the Hiring Manager wondering if you are in some way related to the President or have some other "insider" connection. Now you have become an insider! Congratulations—make the most of it!

So don't be intimidated if you are given a high-level contact. Instead, treat it as a wonderful gift and spend it wisely.

The Chaining Technique

If your network contacts are only one layer deep, you are missing an excellent opportunity to expand your network exponentially. How? By using the same method as successful network marketing—don't just sell your product, sell others on selling your product. Simply put, instead of just updating your contacts as to your situation, ask them to pass on the information to anyone else they feel could help you. You continue to chain from one contact to another as your network continues to expand.

It's not about who you know. It's who *they know*.

As you regularly keep in touch with your contacts, ask them if there are other people you should be contacting. When they inform you of these people, give them a call directly. This will then include second- and third-level contacts as direct first-line contacts. When you contact next-level contacts, send them five copies of your resume and ask them to pass your resume along to those who may be able to help you further in your job search. Let them know that you will be getting back in touch with them after a week or two, then contact them to gather in the names of the people to whom they have passed your resume. Start the process over again with each new person and you will have a nearly continuously expanding network of potential contacts. Following this simple chaining technique will grow your network far beyond your immediate circle of contacts.

The Bird Dog Technique

“Please” goes a long way in a job search.

Similar to the Chaining Technique, the Bird Dog Technique is especially well suited for those network contacts who are unable to help you at the first level, yet are willing to put in an extra effort on your behalf. Aunt Mabel would probably be a good example. Ask these network contacts to reach out and do some work for you. It may include pulling the want ads in your local newspaper back home. Or contacting the local chamber of commerce. Or doing some library research. Or even some basic phone calls. This technique is especially important if distance is a factor in your job search. If you have a local “bird dog” that can sniff out and track down opportunities for you on your behalf, you will have gained a valuable scout in your job search battle plan.

Bird dogs are most likely to be friends and family members, since it requires asking a personal favor for them to fill this role. Explain what your specific needs are in the early stages of your job search and what they should keep their eyes and ears open for, and then ask for their continued assistance as your job search develops. They will usually be more than happy to help (assuming you have been a good friend/neighbor/nephew/etc.), and it will give them an opportunity to provide you with valuable assistance in your job search. But a note of caution: do not use this technique as a crutch to get others to do your work for you. This technique is to be used as an extension to reach into a marketplace that you cannot reach due to personal constraints. Don’t abuse the privilege.

The Networking Business Card Technique

One of the difficulties in making introductions at the entry level is that you lack the standard “business card introduction” that most businesspeople rely upon. However, there is a valid alternative for the entry level job seeker—the Networking Business Card.

Business cards provide you with an assumed level of rank and status in the world of work.

Before attending job fairs or professional association meetings, you may want to develop your own personal Networking Business Card. You will have ready information to hand out to any contact at any time when making an introduction. Networking Business Cards are different from standard business cards in that they provide information about you independent of a particular employer. They are ideally suited for the entry level.

A Networking Business Card gives you a distinct competitive edge in the job market. Why? Because virtually none of the other job seekers have a business card yet. Why would they? We usually receive our first business card along with our first professional job, but as you will see, the Networking Business Card can be vitally important in your search for that first job.

Have your information printed in the standard business card size (3½" wide by 2" high), but with the following "kicker" format:

Your name

Description of your target career interest

Home street address

City, state, zip Phone number

E-mail address

The "kicker" is the second line, which can provide descriptive information, such as "Java Developer" or specific job search information such as "Seeking Retail Management Position" or other "Seeking . . ." information. This line replaces the standard title line on most business cards, and stands out in the eyes of the receiver.

You can develop this card format using a business card template with most major word processors (such as Microsoft Word). Avery sells business card forms which work with most laser printers. You can also have them printed for you at FedEx Kinko's (they can set it up for you) or any other print shop.

The Mini-Resume Card Technique

The Mini-Resume Card is similar to the Networking Business Card in that it is contained within a standard business card size using the same format on the front (name, "kicker," home address, city, state, zip, and phone numbers). But the back side of the card becomes a "mini-resume" in that it provides a summary of the high points of your resume. It is comparable to the Summary section of the resume. Don't feel you have to be comprehensive—this is just a "hook" to get a potential employer interested. It takes more effort than a one-sided business card, but the impact is worth it.

Networking Business Cards and Mini-Resume Cards will get you noticed, and they have an additional advantage in that they are often filed differently from other job search materials. While resumes often get locked away in the "candidate vault" and may never again see the light of day, business cards are often placed in Rolodexes or business card folders, or are even entered into contact databases. Their uniqueness is part of their appeal. Once you have them, you will wonder how you ever marketed yourself without them!

The E-mail Signature Technique

Another easy and simple way to "get the word out" on your job search is to modify your standard e-mail signature to include your "Seeking . . ." information. Since it's e-mail and not restricted by the physical constraints you might have with a business card, you can be very specific, including job type, industry and geography.

Most e-mail programs allow you to set a standard signature to your e-mails which is automatically inserted or appended to the end of your e-mail. It saves you time, since you don't have to enter your personal information each time.

Most people just put in their name and possibly their e-mail address in the signature. However, this signature space offers an excellent opportunity for adding additional exposure for your job search.

You can add (or modify) your e-mail signature by following the instructions for your e-mail program. In Microsoft Outlook, click Tools, then Options, then the Mail Format tab. At the bottom, you have an option for adding a signature for new messages and for replies and forwards. Click on "Signatures" to setup a new signature or edit an old one.

Under Hotmail, click on Options, then click Signature under Additional Options. You can then enter your signature.

Here is a sample signature to show you what one would look like:

Tracy Graduate

Accounting Major, Graduating May 20xx, Illinois State University

Seeking Auditor position in the public accounting field in the Chicago area.

Please send any and all job leads to my attention!

The last line is your "impassioned plea" to help others understand your call to action.

Your Very Best Personal Contacts

Ironically, your very best network contacts are sitting there with you every day, in class, at lunch, even in the library. Your best network contacts are other students who are also in your major and seeking jobs in your field. If they are truly active in their job search, they will have access to additional first-line contacts that can greatly benefit you. The relationship should be one of give and take, so that you are also providing them with networking contact information.

Your competition can also be your greatest ally.

Be sure to ask who they are contacting and what kinds of results they are getting. Find out if there are any companies on their list that you have missed. There can often be a great synergy among students who have worked together for the past several years. They may be seeking another geographical area and are happy to pass on their leads in the areas in which you are interested. You may be seeking jobs in a particular industry and are happy to pass on leads in the other industries to them. Some students have even organized informal job search groups to provide networking support on campus. If there isn't a job networking group (either formal or informal) organized on your campus, put a bulletin board up on your wall, and offer refreshments to all those who stop in with "Hot Tips," for Job Seekers, and watch your board fill up quickly. Your Job Search Central may indeed become Job Search Central for many others as well.

Your Second-Best Personal Contacts

The next best network contacts are also close to home—all your friends who graduated last semester or last year. These are college grads who have (hopefully) just completed their successful job search. Unless they burned or buried their notes when the job offer came through, they probably have scores of potential contacts whom they worked long and hard to dig up. Think of it as using last year's chemistry final to prep for this year's final. They have all the "class notes" that will get you off to a quick start. In addition, they are often well placed in the field and can give you insider support like no one else.

Job search is a great excuse to call up all your friends who graduated last year.

While it may be difficult to locate your old friends after graduation if you have not kept in touch, you can probably still locate them through the Alumni Office. If that fails, try to locate them through their old home address and phone number (Mom and/or Dad). Or send them a letter first class to their old campus address. If it is within one year and they gave the post office their forwarding address, your letter will reach them via mail forwarding, or it might be returned to you undelivered with their new address stamped on the outside of the envelope.

The Apple on the Desk Technique

As previously stated, some professors are rather poorly connected with the work world outside campus. However, there are two types of professors who have impressive external contacts, some of which you may not be aware of at all. But you should be.

Remember the apple on the desk routine that some kids went through back in second grade? Well, that technique of endearing oneself to the teacher may have lost some of its luster in the collegiate world, but its value has not diminished. There are several professors on campus who are able to help you tremendously in your job search if you are willing to reach out to them.

The first type of professor network contact is the Company Connection professor. This professor usually is a department head or teaches some of the required courses for upper level students. The professor may teach the capstone class for the major or may be involved in academic advisement within the major. The key is that companies (such as ours) will target this professor as their campus connection, the one who will steer them to the "prize students" and, as appropriate, steer the prize students to us. Many companies spend a great deal of time and energy cultivating these relationships. It may be with more than one professor on larger campuses, but at some campuses all students are required to go through a particular professor's capstone class. And that professor usually has an excellent feel for who will be the outstanding hires from the upcoming graduating class.

The other type of professor who can assist greatly in your job search is the Company Consultant professor who spends time consulting with outside companies. Ever notice how vacant the campus becomes during summer? Where do you think most professors go? Off to terrorize nine-year-olds as a counselor at some backwoods summer camp? Unlikely. Most are either doing further academic work or are consulting with businesses. Those who are consulting are likely to be very well connected. And they are often willing and able to help those students who seek out their assistance in job search.

Yes, professors can help you move forward in your job search, but you must make the first move.

So if you thought that your profs were merely a sideline distraction on your way to your future goal of work, you may want to reconsider your teacher-student relationships. You are being evaluated from the

moment you set foot on that campus. All of your contacts can be potentially helpful or potentially damaging. Treat all people with common courtesy and respect. And it does not hurt to put an apple on the desk (figuratively) of the professors who teach the upper level classes. Most professors develop a personal relationship with less than 10 percent of their students. Please include yourself in that 10 percent with all of your professors, especially those who are well connected. Developing this personal relationship is as simple as participating in class and stopping by their office during open office hours.

Attempt to learn more about the subject than what is taught in class. Attempt to internalize the classroom information so that you can better understand its practical work world application and attempt to develop a relationship with your professor above and beyond the lecturer/note taker passive model many students accept as the norm—not just as a selfish ambition for using the professor in your job search, but because you sincerely want to learn more about the subject and the profession.

This contact alone could pay off enormous dividends in your job search. Yet that is merely a by-product of your taking the time to develop personal relationships with your professors. If you do so, you will greatly benefit. But it is up to you to make the first move. Your professors will not typically come looking for you. You must go looking for them.

Your Very Best Professional Contacts

They are out there. They are well placed in industry. They have never met you before. Yet they are ready and willing to help you find your first job.

Who are they? Alumni—probably the most underutilized contacts a college grad can have, yet also the most valuable. Why alumni? Because they meet the entire key criteria for becoming a top-notch network contact. They are often working in professional-level positions with employers you would have an interest in (especially if they graduated in the same degree program). They have knowledge about your background since they graduated from the same college. A recent survey showed that more than 90 percent of active alums are willing to help new grads from their alma mater, if they are approached in a professional, courteous manner. Alumni have a perceived bond with you that can help you to succeed in finding a great job.

First, contact the career office and consult with your counselor regarding your desire of contacting alumni in your chosen field. Your career counselor will work with you in determining the specific alumni and either make the initial contact (phone/email) to introduce you and ask for their availability/receptiveness in granting assistance. Once the reply has been received, the counselor will then individually guide the student through the process of communicating with alumni.

Communicating with alum can be an extremely valuable experience. Make sure that you know and understand, through your counselor, how the process is done in a respectful, polite manner. Remember, alumni can be turned off by abrasive, demanding and entitlement student attitudes. Alums are donating their time to assist you with your inquires and direction. They are not obligated to assist you, much less get you a job.

What to do with these names once you get them? Contact each and every one by phone and then follow up by e-mail. Schedule face-to-face or phone meetings. Bring these alums into your circle of contacts and make it personal! If there are local chapters of the Alumni Association in the city or area you are targeting, find out when their meetings are taking place and ask if you can attend. This is networking paradise! Help them to get to know you (the only “unknown” in the entire equation) so that they can

help you more effectively. You will be amazed at the positive results. Remember: always be professional & courteous

Professional Contacts in Your Own Backyard

During the course of your college career, you have undoubtedly been exposed to a variety of professionals who have come to campus for one reason or another. Most common are the professionals who guest lecture in classes. Or the professionals who give presentations to clubs. Or the professionals who give lectures before the student body.

That person who spoke on campus may be your direct connection to your future employer.

Did you take good notes? Do you know their names, what company they are with, and where they are located? If so, now is the time to track them down! If not, trace back to the contact who arranged their campus visit and ask for contact information. Then call them to inform them of your job search. Let them know that you remembered them and the information they provided when they were on campus. Let them know that you are now ready to enter the field. Then ask them for their list of the top five companies you should contact. Be sure to include them as part of your personal network by sending them a copy of your resume and asking for their critique. By keeping in close contact with these industry movers and shakers, you will have an “in” that very few others have tapped into.

The Networking by Association Technique

Association networking is a popular way to establish truly valuable network contacts among professionals, yet very few entry level candidates make use of this available resource. If there is an association for your chosen profession, find out if you can join as a student member in the local chapter in the city you are most interested in living in after graduation. The membership dues are often reduced for student members, and many associations strongly encourage student participation. Don't just join the student chapter on campus. Make sure you are a member of the local association chapter.

After you have joined, you will usually be given a membership directory. If not, call and ask for one. This membership directory can be worth its weight in gold to you since it is the “who's who” in your field for that local area. As a start, call the person in charge of membership and ask for recommendations of people within the association whom you can speak to about seeking entry level jobs in the local area. You will usually be given the name of a well-connected member who is willing to refer you to others or who may even be willing to help you personally. You now have an outstanding contact who can serve as a starting point for further contacts.

When you speak with this contact person, make it clear that you are a student member of the association and are seeking help in locating entry level employment. Most association members feel a professional obligation toward helping others get started in the field. You often will be given the names of companies and other individuals to contact. Or the person may offer to contact them on your behalf. Either way, you now have a “warm call” instead of a “cold call” into prime hiring companies in your target geographical area.

If you are nearby or plan a trip to the area, make it a point to attend one of the association's meetings. Most meet on a monthly or bimonthly basis. These meetings are a networking contact dream! Walking, talking, living, and breathing network contacts. All in your field. All in one room. And all willing to help you in your job search. Remember to have plenty of Networking Business Cards in your pocket—you will

need them. But use them only at or near the end of a conversation. If you just walk around handing them out, you will likely get the quick boot—figuratively or possibly even literally. When you do give out your card, don't be shy about asking for one of theirs.

When you are at this type of gathering, carry a notepad so you can record the information from your many conversations. While it is acceptable to record specific information being supplied during a conversation (such as when a contact gives you a phone number to call), remember to follow this simple etiquette rule: if you want to write notes about the person with whom you are talking, do it later; if you want to write notes about another person (such as the name, title, and company of a recommended contact), you may do so during the conversation. It is still important to take notes on each person with whom you speak for later reference. Just make mental notes, then retreat to a corner or pop out to the restroom to “download” when you reach your point of information overload. An excellent place to record information is directly on the person's business card; if you are offered one—if not, remember to ask for one. If you forgot to get that all-important business card, be sure to take good notes in your notepad, including the person's title and company name. Trust nothing to memory.

If there is an association for your chosen profession, join it. If there are two, join them both. If there are three, join all three. Be a joiner.

If you are prone to forgetting a person's name, get in the habit of asking people to repeat their names to you and ask for a spelling if it is an uncommon or unusual name. Asking the person to repeat their name is a very common name memory technique which also serves as a compliment to the person, since you are telling them that you consider their name important enough to remember. It is an excellent way to make a positive first impression.

Follow up on all contacts made at such meetings with a phone call or e-mail. Again, it will broaden your network exponentially since nearly all the people you meet are connected to others who are able to help.

Don't forget your association membership directory. It can provide you with a series of warm calls in tracking down potential employers. Be sure to mention you are a student member of the association—it's an instant icebreaker!

The Networker's Networking Technique

There are certain people who have jobs that are dependent upon networking for survival. These include stockbrokers, bankers, real estate agents, insurance agents, even barbers—all are dependent upon personal networks for their livelihood. If you have a personal relationship with someone in one of these or some other sales-oriented or personal-service professions, ask if they will tap into their personal network to assist you in your job search.

Some people network for a living. Tap into the power of their network.

Our company recently hired an individual from out of town who had originally contacted a real estate agent our company works with on relocations. The real estate agent was aware of our hiring needs and referred the person to our office. The networking link between candidate and employer had come from a third party. Yet the real estate agent will also benefit, since the new employee is now her dedicated customer and part of her network of contacts for future business.

This is the value of networking. In practice, it can be extremely powerful. The business world is like a large web, with many interconnecting parts. Your job is to tap in to the initial connections then work through that web of connections.

Tapping into the Political Network

Want to have some fun with networking? Contact the state senator, state representative, or U.S. representative for your chosen geographical area. Now here are people who are truly well connected! If they know that a potential voter is going to be in their area, they will usually “oblige you ever so kindly” by giving you several business leads to tap into. If you happen to be active in a Young Republicans or Young Democrats group, it is an additional plus in your favor (assuming you are in the “right” camp). If you actually did volunteer campaign work for a politician, now is the time to cash in your chips. Yet no matter what your political affiliation, you will always be a valuable political connection to the politician.

Politicians are not likely to be continuous contacts, but if you use the following line with them, it is almost guaranteed to generate strong, one-time results:

“As I was making calls to others and asking for referrals to hiring companies, it suddenly dawned on me—you, Mr. /Ms. Politician, are probably the most knowledgeable person in our entire district on the subject of jobs. I would certainly appreciate any recommendations regarding employers that might have work in the _____ area.”

Guaranteed results! What politician would admit they are not the most knowledgeable person in their district when it comes to jobs? In addition, you may end up with referrals at some of the highest levels within the company (often CEO/President/VP level), which always works well when making your initial contact (see “The Law of Network Gravity” mentioned earlier).

Also, be sure to mention the name of the politician who referred you when you make the contact. Many of these businesspeople owe “political favors” to the politicians and are more willing to help you when the politician’s name is dropped.

Even if you do not get through to the actual politicians directly, you will likely find someone on their staff who can assist you. Many politicians have assumed the role of the ultimate consumer advocate and have staffs ready to assist you in every facet of life. Don’t be intimidated by the fact that most politicians will be caught off guard by this approach—it is rather unique and you may be the very first person to make such a request of them. Remember, their life is totally devoted to serving their loyal constituents, right? Your tax dollars at work!

"Network Intelligence Gathering"

Networking is often considered a less than noble activity reserved for the most desperate in their job search. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Networking is one of the most effective and efficient activities in finding your first position.

The reality of the job market is that many positions are never advertised, never actively recruited for, never made known outside of the organization. Yet they continue to be filled. How? By referral of someone internal or external. By the “who-do-you-know” method of job search. That is what we call networking.

Let's understand some of the dynamics behind networking by looking at a practical case example:

Entry level hiring within our company is usually planned a full eight to twelve months in advance of the actual hire date. The first persons made aware of our entry level hiring needs are our local management team. Planning for entry level hiring is part of our annual strategic planning process, and the first step toward potentially filling the positions are internal recommendations from our local management staff.

The process goes to the next level when we announce the potential hiring needs to all of our local employees. Next level is a request to our area office. Then a request to corporate, each time seeking qualified candidates who may be "already in the pipeline." If we have not yet identified potential candidates for the positions, we will integrate the positions into our on-campus hiring process. And no, we typically do not advertise the positions. And college students who have tapped into our internal network often gain job offers before we even begin our on-campus interviewing.

The key driver behind the internal referrals is our Employee Referral Program. Our company, like many large employers, pays a monetary bonus (often several thousand dollars) for employee referrals that are hired. Money is a very effective motivation to drive employee referrals. The "who-do-you-know" network is alive and functioning quite well in the employment marketplace.

Yet most college students do not consider themselves to be very well plugged in when it comes to networking. "After all, who do I know who can offer me a job?" Perhaps no one directly, but networking is not about first-level contacts. The key to effective networking is what I call "The Ripple Effect." Simply stated, The Ripple Effect is similar to what happens when you toss a stone into a pond. The first ripple is the largest ripple, but it is the second and third ripples that further widen the affected surface area. The more stones that break the surface, the greater the amount of the pond that is filled with your ripples. Moral to the story: if you want to give yourself the opportunity to make a ripple in the employment world, you are going to have to toss a few stones into the pond. Otherwise you probably will not even break the surface.

In building your job search network, you will need to develop a list of potential network contacts. Don't worry about whether they are personally responsible for hiring. It's not who you know, it's who they know.

How Introverts Can Be Better Networker

A common assumption that isn't necessarily true is that an extroverted "people person" is the best type of networker. While an extroverted person might be better at meeting new people, someone who's more introverted can be better at the second part of business networking -- communicating his or her ideas and forming meaningful relationships.

In my experience, introverted people tend to be better listeners and ask more questions, which are essential factors for getting to know a person and his or her business. But far too often, introverts eliminate themselves from the benefits that come from networking and relationship-building because they aren't comfortable initializing conversations.

Consider me, for example. One evening during a dinner conversation with my wife I mentioned something about my being an extrovert. She looked at me and said, "Um, honey, I hate to break it to you but, you're an introvert."

Related: Five Ways to Take Charge of Your Own Networking

An introvert? A networker like me? I laughed, but she insisted I was, and she outlined all the ways I have introverted tendencies. So, I went online and took a personality test. It determined I am a "situational extrovert," that I am a loner who is reserved around strangers but outgoing in the right context.

It struck me then that I started the BNI networking organization almost three decades ago because I was naturally uncomfortable meeting new people. I found that the smaller, more intimate approaches to building a network enabled me to meet people in an organized, structured networking environment that did not require that I actually "talk to strangers."

While there are numerous techniques that can help make networking easier for introverts, here are three that can get you meeting new people now and building valuable relationships for the long haul:

Related: Anchor Your Network with Strong Relationships

1. Be an 'ambassador.'

If you feel uncomfortable approaching strangers at, say, a chamber business mixer, you can volunteer to be an ambassador for that group. In this role, you are in effect a host for the chamber, which makes it easier and more natural for you to greet people and say, "Welcome to our event. My name is [your name]. I'm an ambassador for the chamber and . . ." Before you know it, the ice is broken and you're engaged in conversation.

2. Get involved.

Opportunities to learn the art of networking abound, and often in places you may not have considered. Do you do volunteer work for a cause you feel passionate about? You can help organize committees, recruit other volunteers (on the phone or in person) or help solicit donations for your group's worthy cause. You start off talking about the project and the next thing you know you're chatting about any number of topics.

These can be effective opportunities for meeting new people -- many of whom could be future clients.

3. Be an influencer.

Another way to break the ice is by speaking formally to a group about a specific topic. People have become great networkers by joining a parent-teacher association, where there are opportunities to speak on behalf of the children, or by speaking at a political event for a local or national aspiring candidate. Once you have presented the platform of a political candidate to a group of voters that you can sway with the power of your words, you can present yourself, one-on-one, in an equally engaging manner.

Related: New To Networking? No Problem

Bottom line: Networking is a skill that can be learned no matter your level of gregariousness. If you remain ill-at-ease in environments where you have to mix and mingle or meet new people one-on-one, you can take steps to interact with people in other ways to help break the ice. You'll find that when you learn ways to handle these situations, you'll become more relaxed and confident in a networking setting.

The Foolproof Technique for People Who Can't Stand Introducing Themselves

If you can't stand to answer the question "What do you do?" keep reading. Here is an easy-to-remember, easy-to-use technique that is conversational in nature. It gets the job done with only three lines.

First start by stating the problem you solve. The line starts with “You know how (insert problem)? in the form of a question.

The second line starts with “What I do is (insert how you solve the problem.)

The third line starts with “I’m a (insert your job title.)

Put it all together for a foolproof self-intro that works every time; Perfect for those who can’t stand introducing themselves.

Examples:

You know how many young couples dream of buying their first home?
What I do is provide first time homeowner financing to make that possible.
I’m a mortgage broker.

You know how big brands like Starbucks and Target have great visual branding?
What I do is great visual branding for people.
I’m a personal branding coach, specializing in all things visual.

You know how many people struggle with their weight, or have backaches and knee problems?
What I do is relieve pain and reduce weight with strength training, which creates an improved physical condition.
I’m a Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach – a personal trainer at the highest level.

Why it Works

The first sentence gets the person your speaking (your audience) with to “go along for the ride.” After the first sentence that is in the form of a question you should get a confirming nod or a “yeah” showing that they are “with you.” They will “get it” if you have used a highly relatable problem. The second sentence, states in an easy to understand way what you do. The second sentence “pays off” the first sentence.

The third sentence gives your official title and reinforces sentence two.

A Few Tips:

When you use the same word(s) repeatedly, it makes it easier for your audience to understand. The more they “get it” the more likely you are going to hear those three little words, we all long to hear “tell me more!”

Avoid acronyms, or if you use them, explain them. A variation on the last part of the second sentence of the first example might be: I’m a CSCS, a Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach. You never want your audience to have to guess at what you do.

Remember to keep it simple. It should be simple enough that your average 12 year-old would “get it.” You can always elaborate on what you do.

Be prepared for success by having a few business cards in your purse or pocket, you very well may get asked for one!

Networking tips for introverts, the shy and socially challenged

It seems that the road to success is networking. It can be career suicide if you fail to network in this day and age. Everyone is doing it and needs to do it. But for many, networking is more painful than anything imaginable. For introverts, shy people and/or socially challenged, it doesn't mean the end of the world. With the helpful tips found here, you can build a network to match any extrovert.

Before you go to the event you need to prepare and practice. Having done this ahead of time will take some of the pressure off while in the situation. You will know what to say, how to say it, and when to quit.

Prepare:

Write 3-5 open-ended questions that are appropriate for everyone in the room. Such as questions about the venue, food, weather, upcoming holiday, etc. act as ice breakers as a lead-in to a conversation.

Know what's going on around you and the world so that you can keep up with conversations by reading the newspaper, listening/watching the news, and other current events.

If possible, find out who will be there ahead of time. Do a Google/LinkedIn search on people you are interested in meeting. When you have some background information, you can prepare questions and have some knowledge about the person so you won't be at a loss for words.

Assemble a list of goals you would like to achieve at the event. Find a reasonable number of people you would like to connect with at the event. You don't need to talk to everyone, but having a number will keep you focused on continuing the networking.

Practice:

Ask family and close friends to help you prepare for the event by allowing you to practice your questions, body language that is welcoming, friendly and social, and general chit-chat. Ask them for honest feedback and take their suggestions for improvement.

Go over your elevator speech many times so it comes out sounding natural and not over-rehearsed.

Practicing while you are in a safe environment will give you confidence. The more you practice the better and more self-confident you will become, which makes networking so much easier.

While you are there, you are stepping out of your comfort zone to build relationships with people who benefit from knowing you. You have prepared and practiced, and now it's show time

Arrive early before the bulk of the crowd arrives. You will feel less intimidated with only a few people in the room.

Bring a trusted friend/colleague to introduce you to others, provide emotional support, and tips for success. Look around the room for someone who looks like you feel. Engaging in conversation with this person is a low risk way to start the event.

No matter how many people are at the event, you don't have to connect with all of them. You have set a goal. Once you have reached your goal you can either continue or stop the choice is yours.

It's a good idea to take a break from networking to restore your energy. Every venue will have a restroom where you can retreat to. Find a quiet corner to check your email/voice mail or reread your notes and goals.

With a boost of energy, you can continue to work the room.

Fake it until you make it. Walking around the room with a smile, firm handshake and welcoming body language no one will see the terror that is raging throughout your body.

Once you have engaged someone in conversation, you can take on the role of listener. Allow them to do what most people enjoy—talking about them while it takes the pressure from you to keep the conversation going.

Know when and how to end the conversation. There is something to be said about less is more. Instead of getting to the point where you start rambling or fumbling for more conversation, thank them for taking the time to talk with you, acknowledge they must have many people they want to see, you appreciate their time, and you would like to continue the conversation at a mutually convenient time and way.

Ask for a business card or contact information so that you can follow up.

After the event you are finished the hard part, but there is still some work to do. But you will be more comfortable connecting one-on-one and have had time to relax and recharge.

Look at your goals and see if you accomplished them. If the answer is yes, give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done. If not, don't beat yourself up. It isn't about the quantity of your network; it is the quality. You stepped out of your comfort zone and put yourself out there.

Follow up in the way you said you would. You worked hard to get the contact, don't lose it by not following up. Networking is about building a relationship, not just collecting names. Look for ways to be a valuable contact for them and glad you are part of their network. It will serve you later down the road.

You have something to offer everyone you talk to, and they want to meet you. These tips are meant to help you in doing what is uncomfortable for you. Don't hide in a quiet corner, get out there—mix and mingle your way to success.

Top 12 Ice Breaker Questions for Networking Events

The following questions can be used to start and maintain a conversation with a person you are meeting for the first time.

1. What attracted you to the [insert] industry?
2. How did you get your start in the [insert] industry?
3. What do you enjoy most about your role with [insert] company?
4. What do you enjoy most about your profession?
5. What advice would you give to someone just starting out in your business?
6. How is business?
7. What is the #1 challenge your company/industry faces in today's economy?
8. Most businesses have experienced a great deal of change in the last 5 / 10 years. Has your industry seen any significant differences in how it operates now, versus 5 years ago?

9. Looking ahead, what changes do you see forthcoming in your business?
10. Are you happy with the company's strategic direction?
11. If you could change anything about your job/your role/your company, what would it be?
12. What one thing would you do with your career and/or business if you knew you could not fail?

How to Get More Out of the Time You Already Spend Networking

Many people rely on referrals from others as a primary source of business. However, not everyone who relies on referrals is successful. Why is this? Those who are not successful seem to have "surface level" referral relationships.

They know just enough about their referral sources' businesses to get by. They don't actually know a lot about the people themselves. They tend to say vague things like: "He is really nice," "You'll like her; she's a good person," or "Well, if you just meet with him, I am sure you'll like him." If pressed further, they probably couldn't tell you much more about those people -- and they almost certainly have not built enough social capital with them to count on them when they really need something from the relationship (and vice versa).
Related

Building the deep referral relationship -- the kind of relationship that leads to referrals -- is almost completely dependent upon the social capital you have built with someone. Social capital is like financial capital. To amass financial capital, you have to invest and grow your assets. You have to have money in the bank before you can make a withdrawal.

Relationships are very much the same, referral relationships in particular.

Here's a great example of someone who amassed quite a bit of social capital . . . from me!

Alex was what I would call a casual business associate, but from early on after our introduction, every time I spoke to him, he invested in the relationship. He gave me ideas, gave me his time, he even did some work on a website for me. He invested. . . and invested. . . and invested.

I kept asking him how I could help him -- to return the favor and reciprocate for all the kindnesses and great help he'd been to me. His answer every time was, "I don't need anything. I'm happy to do this."

This went on for almost a year. Every two to three months, Alex would show up on my radar and do something for me.

Then, one time, he phoned me and said, "I have a favor to ask. . ." and I stopped him right there before he could say anything else.

"Yes!" I said.

"But you didn't even hear what the favor is!" he said, laughing.

I replied that I didn't have to hear what the favor was. I told him I knew him well enough to know he was not going to ask me something impossible, and that he had invested so much into the relationship that I would do anything in my power to help.

When he told me what he needed, it was easy, a small promotion by me for one of his services. It was such a big thing for Alex, and something easy for me. I was happy to do it!

In my career, a huge number of folks come to me and ask me to promote something for them. The thing is, the majority of those who contact me have never actually met me or had a previous conversation with me. They've never invested in the relationship, yet they want a withdrawal from it!

Before you ask for a withdrawal, make sure to make an investment, and build a deep referral relationship. If you can answer yes to most or all of the following points about a person and her business, you would have a pretty deep referral relationship:

- ✓ You trust them to do a great job and take great care of your referred prospects.
- ✓ You have known each other for at least one year.
- ✓ You understand at least three major products or services within their business and feel comfortable explaining them to others.
- ✓ You know the names of their family members and have met them personally.
- ✓ You have both asked each other how you can help grow your respective businesses.
- ✓ You know at least five of their goals for the year, including personal and business goals.
- ✓ You could call them at 9 o'clock at night if you really needed something.
- ✓ You would not feel awkward asking them for help with either a personal or business challenge.
- ✓ You enjoy the time you spend together.
- ✓ You have regular appointments scheduled, both business and personal.
- ✓ You enjoy seeing them achieve further success.
- ✓ They are "top of mind" regularly.
- ✓ You have open, honest talks about how you can help each other further.

You may be shocked at the level of personal knowledge required for a deep referral relationship, and you may want to argue that referrals should be all about business. I completely disagree. Referrals are personal. When you give a referral, you give a little of your reputation away. You need to know the person that is going to affect your reputation. It takes a lot to develop this type of relationship, but those who do will certainly succeed at building a business from referrals.

You don't need to ask all of these questions in a first encounter with someone. Commit to memory the questions that feel comfortable for you – that you know you could ask with sincere interest.

Remember, people do business with people they like and trust. The most enjoyable conversations are the ones where people can talk about themselves!



Christian Employment Resource
support@christianemployment.com