

Networking Strategies

Networking has been long identified as the most effective job search technique. It helps you tap into the “hidden job market” and gives you an edge in terms of your competition. Below you will find a number of networking strategies. It is not an all-inclusive list, but it will get you started on networking yourself to your next position.

Strategies for Networking

- Make a comprehensive list of everyone you know – family, friends, neighbors, classmates, professors, present and former colleagues, and more. Reach out to them about your career goals and ask for advice, information and resources.
- Ask people in your current network for referrals. Remember they have contacts too – contacts who could provide you with job leads and advice. Inquire if they know of anyone who they think can help.
- Develop an elevator speech – a 30 second pitch that focuses on your unique selling proposition. See our handout on elevator speeches for much more information on this “career branding” technique.
- Choose your personal tagline – a 3-4 word phrase that relates to who you are professionally. Use it in your email signature and on other correspondence. Businesses use these to help you remember them. Think of Allstate – “You’re in good hands” or Wheaties – “The breakfast of champions.” These are just two of many examples of taglines.
- Create your own “business card” for networking events. Put your name, contact information, degree and anticipated date of graduation (or career objective), tagline and other relevant information on it. Give someone more than one business card when networking and ask them to pass it along to others who they think can help you.
- Become a member of relevant professional associations. They provide great networking and professional development opportunities. To find a professional association in your field go to www.careeroverview.com/professional-associations.html or www.weddles.com/associations/index.cfm. Attend local chapter meetings and access the membership list to find others to connect with.

- Attend conventions, conferences, workshops and seminars in your field. Gain new knowledge and skills, while meeting professionals related to your area of interest. Professional associations can be great resources for these professional development opportunities.
- Find and utilize a mentor. Mentors can “open doors” for you and provide you with great advice, information, resources and other contacts.
- Check with Clarkson University Career Services, and other colleges you may have graduated from, about how to tap into their alumni network. Alumni typically feel a connection to their college, and want to give back by helping others from their alma mater.
- Conduct informational interviews – not only great for career exploration, but for networking too. Check out our handout on informational interviewing for much more information about this strategy.
- Seek out volunteer opportunities in your community. These opportunities allow you to extend a caring hand, while also meeting new people and expanding your network of contacts.
- Use business and social networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) to build impressive web profiles, make individual connections, join relevant groups, search for jobs and discover who (in your network) can “open doors” for you. See our handouts on LinkedIn for much more information about the #1 professional online networking site.
- Develop a personal website that focuses on your career marketing and brand. You can also use it to develop an online portfolio to showcase your work.
- Start blogging about your profession. It’s a terrific way to grow your network, show your expertise and attract job offers. In addition, find blogs in your field and actively participate. It will keep you in the “line of sight” of others.
- Become a contributor (by writing articles) for online and print publications in your field.
- Visit reliable career sites on the Internet for a list of key career networking resources, information and other ideas. A few of those sites include www.quintcareers.com/networking_resources.html and www.rileyguide.com/nettips.html.
- Start networking before you need it. The best time to network is before you need anything. In addition, remember to “pay it forward.”

Approaching Your Network

- Introduce yourself (if it is someone you don’t know) and – if relevant – indicate who referred you.
- If you are face-to-face, remember your non-verbal cues – firm handshake, good eye contact and a smile.

- Start the conversation by showing an interest in them.
- Provide them with your elevator speech, including your career goals and “unique selling proposition.”
- Ask them for advice, information, resources, contacts and job leads related to your career goals.
- If they do know of an opening or lead, get the name, title, address, e-mail address and phone number of the contact person. Ask if you can use their name when you contact them.
- If they don't know of an opening or lead, ask them to keep you in mind if they should hear of something appropriate. Make sure to give them a copy of your resume or ask if you can send them a copy.
- Ask if there is someone else you should be talking to – someone who doesn't necessarily have a job opening, but someone who could help put you in touch with someone who does.
- Thank them and show your sincere appreciation for their help.
- Ask if there's something you could do for them (networking is a team sport).
- That day, or the next day at the latest, send them a personalized thank you note.
- Follow up with them periodically to “check-in” and to help keep you in their “line of sight.” Make sure to notify them when you're successful in finding something.