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Title:

Networking for College Students and Grads: Top 7 Steps You Can Take Now

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Summary:

Most college students and recent graduates wait until the last minute to begin planting the seeds that will affect their careers and the rest of their lives. If you want to build a strong, integrated network of contacts and friends, you must begin your career networking now.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

If you had to grow your own food, would you wait until you were hungry to plant your seeds?

Most certainly you would not! Why? Because of the laws of nature. When you plant seeds, you have to nurture them and wait for them to grow. There is nothing humanly possible that you can do to accelerate the process. You water them, make sure the soil is rich, and allow time and nature to do the rest.

So why are you waiting to plant the seeds that can positively affect your career and the rest of your life? If you want to build a strong, integrated network of contacts and friends, you must begin �planting the seeds of your career� now. If you wait until you�re hungry to start planting those seeds, then you�ll starve before the seeds mature.

As simple as it may sound, networking can be a painfully frustrating effort�especially when your goal is to find immediate employment. Tasks such as building contacts or collecting names and phone numbers theoretically take only a few simple steps. But building relationships requires more than passing and collecting business cards. It isn�t the occasional phone call, the holiday greeting card, or remembering names of family members you�ve never met. You cannot possibly build as many deep, lasting relationships in your life, as you may be able to cram names into your address book. Yet one good friend is often worth more than dozens of names of people whom you barely know and have little in common with.

In essence, I am speaking of quality over quantity. It�s an old theme, but a valid one. It may sound overwhelming, but remember your objective. Here are the top seven steps you can take today that will have a great payoff tomorrow.

<b>1.Volunteer</b>

Volunteering is one of the most effective ways to build relationships with people. It runs much deeper than the informational interview. Your involvement with an organization bonds you to other members or volunteers within that same organization. By working together to reach a common goal, you are automatically building relationships. These individuals will be able to discover your talents, your values and your character. These are things that cannot normally be accomplished through a single 30 minute meeting.

<b>2. Intern</b>

This will provide you with an excellent opportunity to gain hand-on experience in your chosen field for either credit, for a nominal salary wage, or, if you�re lucky, both. Many national and local organizations, especially in the nonprofit and communication areas, have intern programs. There are many books which details thousands of these opportunities, including Peterson�s Guide to Internships and the Last Guide to Internships You�ll Ever Need, which is available for free from CollegeRecruiter.com. All you need to do to receive the book is to register for free at http://www.CollegeRecruiter.com .

<b>3. Get a Part-Time Job</b>

I don�t mean the flipping burger type of job. You can reap the rewards from working in an environment that you�re planning to spend most of your career in. It is also the perfect opportunity to get to know and connect with professionals within your chosen field.

<b>4. Adopt a Mentor:</b>

No matter where you are in your career, it is always good to have a mentor. This is especially important in college, when you�re at a critical point in your career development. By associating yourself with someone already out in the field, you can learn all kinds of insights that you won�t get in the classroom:

\* You can observe the person in action.

\* You can learn how he or she developed into the position they currently hold. You will hear about the pitfalls as well as the victories.

\* You can learn of the various types of positions within the field you wish to enter.

\* You can gain a clearer direction for yourself from your mentor�s guidance in academic choices and extracurricular activities.

\* From your mentor�s connections with other people, he or she may be able to find new opportunities to serve and learn.

\*The mentor can help you be sure of your career choice decision.

<b>5. Get to Know Your Teachers</b>

The fact is that many of the professors you have right now can be invaluable sources of advice, guidance and networking. Teachers and professors have associations and relationships in the business world as well as the campus community. However, they don�t go around announcing this extra perk to the class. In fact, they are usually very discreet about their choices. You must go to them�on your own! Your assigned academic advisor can be a great person to start with, especially if you feel anxiety about approaching someone else.

<b>6. Join Professional Student Organizations</b>

Many professional and volunteer organizations have student chapters, especially on our nation�s larger campuses. If no student chapters exist, you can usually apply for a student membership in a professional organization at a reduced rate, and thus attend meetings normally held off-campus. What an opportunity to meet influential people.

<b>7. Think of Who Else You Know</b>

Through your intimates and family members, you probably already have a strong network in place. The only problem is that it is �asleep.� That is, most of the people in your network may not necessarily see you in terms of the career for which you are preparing. Instead, you are to them whatever is the nature of your relationship: the niece or nephew, the client, the patient, fellow club member, or the person next door. If you have a network that is a �sleep�, you must �wake �em up� and let them be aware of all you can do.

In this short read, I have given you quite a bit of work to do. But remember, you�re investing in your future. Every relationship, every deed, every time you go out and meet, greet and serve the needs of others, you are planting seeds. Take the time to nourish these seeds and you shall be successful in your career and in life.