









Seeking a New Career or Advancement

Preparing Your Resume

Job Searching and Professional Networking

Interviewing

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On the job

Getting Interviews through Networking

It can be difficult to land interviews off of a resume alone. There are strategies that can make a big difference in getting results. This advice can help you overcome some of the challenges associated with job boards, such as out-of-date listings and heavy application volumes that can make it hard to stand out.

The idea of networking can seem daunting for many, however there are actionable steps you can take to make the most of your networking efforts. You'll learn how to find people to connect with, how to schedule and prepare for important conversations, what to talk about, and how to follow up. If some of these strategies and actions feel challenging at first, don't worry; they get easier over time. Plus, you'll be getting more interviews, so it will all be worth it!

The Importance of Networking

Learning how to network effectively is a really valuable skill with a wide range of benefits. It's something you'll want to continue to focus on, and the connections you make and maintain through strategic networking can have long-lasting positive effects on your career advancement.

Strategic networking can help you overcome some of the challenges associated with online job applications. Some of the benefits of networking include:

- Getting accurate information about job availability.** The fact that a role is posted online doesn't mean that the hiring team is actively reviewing applications. There is often a delay between the time a role is open and the time it's posted online, as well as the time it is filled and taken down from online job boards. At the same time, there are often open positions that are not (yet) posted online for a variety of reasons. Networking can help you ensure you've got up-to-date information.
- Learning more details about the role.** Job descriptions are not always precise. As a result, you might end up applying for roles that you think are a good fit but are, in fact, not. Or, you might fail to properly tailor your application to meet the needs of the hiring team. Insider information via networking can help you understand what the team is really looking for.
- Standing out amid the competition.** Once a job is posted to a job board, there are often tens or even hundreds of people applying to it. It can be difficult to stand out. Networking can help you get an early jump on a new opportunity before it's posted.

The networking process described in this guide can help you address all these challenges.

Through a short and focused conversation with someone at your target company, who has insider knowledge of relevant opportunities, you will be able to:

- Understand the requirements for your target role at that specific company. Jobs with the same title can vary greatly from company to company, and the actual requirements are not always obvious from job descriptions.
- Gain insight into the company's organizational structure and team culture to learn what's required for success, and understand how best to position yourself in your application materials and interviews.
- Learn about ways to monitor and apply for opportunities at that specific company, so you can know exactly what's available and how to float your application to the top of the pile. You might even be able to get a referral.
- Establish a relationship with a professional who might be able to help you in your current job search and be a part of your professional network moving forward.

Networking for Your Job Search: The Process

How to connect with the right people

The process of networking for your job search begins with identifying the right people to network with. You are looking for insider information on the role and its application process, as well as other relevant opportunities.

People you select to network with should work in, or close to, your target role at a company you are interested in working for. These people will have the information you need, beyond what's publicly posted online. They will likely understand the exact skills and qualities the hiring team is looking for. They may know the status of currently open roles and upcoming openings, and they might even be able to connect you directly to the hiring team.

If you are already connected to the right people, you can jump straight to Step 2 below. If you don't currently know such people, begin with finding and connecting with them as described in Step 1.

Step 1: Finding the right people

To begin, put together a list of the companies you're interested in. The more companies you have on your list, the more people you will be able to reach out to, and the more opportunities that will be available to you. Don't be surprised if your company list grows to 50 or more companies. It might sound like a lot, but remember that not every company will have the right role available when you need it.

If you are not sure how to identify target companies for your job search, consider the following ideas:

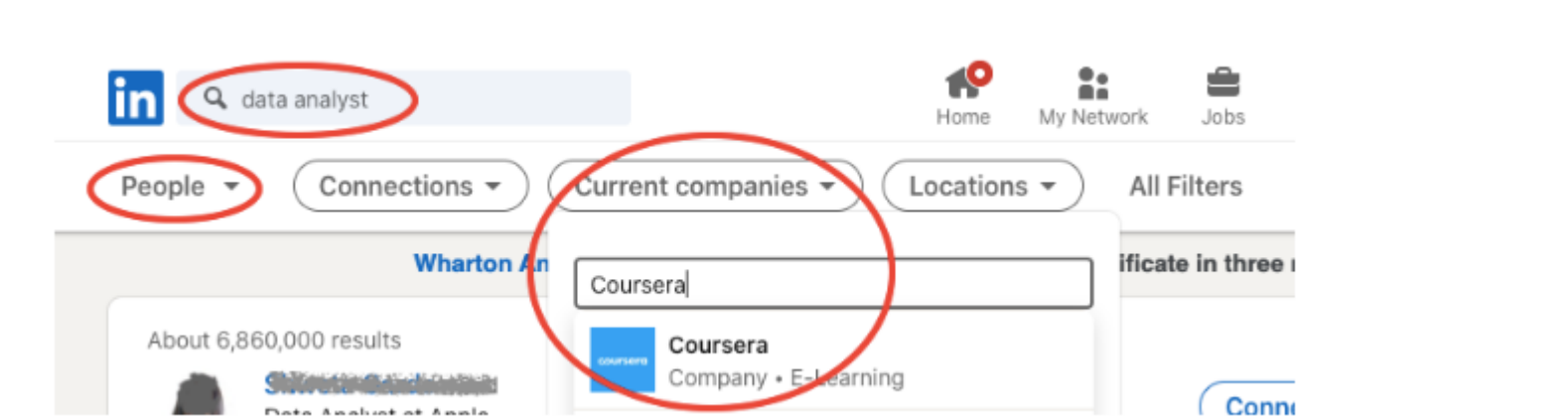
- Search job boards for openings.** If a company has ever posted a relevant role, it's worth exploring further.
- Go through your existing contacts and research the companies where they work.** Even if you don't know anyone in your target role, your personal and professional contacts might be able to introduce you to their relevant coworkers.
- Identify a target industry** (e.g., education, technical, finance). If you know one company within that industry, you can perform a search for its competitors to expand your list.
- Map out companies located in your area** (or companies with a remote workforce, if you are looking to work remotely). You want to make sure you can definitely be considered for any opportunity you uncover.

Remember, your target companies do not need to have open jobs posted—you will find out exactly what is currently available there through your networking conversations.

Step 2: Connecting via LinkedIn

Once you know the companies you are interested in, you can start connecting with relevant people. The method described here uses LinkedIn because it is accessible to most people. You can also ask for introductions from mutual connections, attend professional events to meet people, post in networking communities online, or use any other way you prefer.

To find people through LinkedIn, begin with performing a LinkedIn People Search using your target job title as the search string, and setting a filter for "Current Companies." See below for an example searching for a Data Analyst at Coursera.



Review the profiles that come up to identify people you want to reach out to. Focus on people you'd like to learn from and that you think you can build a rapport with based on their background, interests, and even their tone of communication. Keep in mind that people with well-developed LinkedIn profiles—that include profile photos, summaries, and other details—are more likely to reply to you than those who have very basic profiles, because they are likely to be more active LinkedIn users.

Once you identify a person you might be interested in speaking to, send them a connection request with a note explaining why you are reaching out.

Sample LinkedIn outreach message:

Note that some of your connection requests may go unanswered. Don't get discouraged or take it personally. Many people are too busy or simply don't monitor their LinkedIn messages. The great thing is that LinkedIn provides you with access to a large number of professionals, and it's a great idea to reach out to a lot of people.

Step 3: Schedule and prepare for the conversation

Once you've established the connection, you can ask your new contact for a time to speak. It is important to be open to communicating via the connection's preferred approach (in-person, video, phone, in writing, etc.), but ideally, you want to schedule a live conversation. It's generally a more effective way to build a relationship, and can often make it easier to get your specific questions answered.

Make scheduling easy by suggesting a specific time to speak, offering to work around their calendar, and sending out a calendar invitation with information on how you will connect (phone, video conferencing, etc.).

Sample meeting request message:

Note that some people find it easier to provide information in writing. If you don't get a response to your original request for a conversation, you can follow up by asking whether it would be easier for them to answer a few questions over email. Remember, everyone is different and it's important to gauge and adjust to the style of the person you are reaching out to!

Don't be discouraged if someone does not reply to you immediately. People are busy. Since you have already established a connection, it's a good idea to follow up after a few days, and then again a week later to give them a chance to reply.

If you still don't hear back after a couple of follow-ups, you can assume this person is too busy at this time to speak with you and move on to other potential contacts. Remember that while this is a process of developing personal connections, it's also a numbers game, and you should plan to reach out to a lot of people!

Before moving on, acknowledge your decision to your new contact—a quick note will help ensure there is no awkwardness so you can easily reconnect in the future.

Sample moving-on note:

Preparation

Once the conversation is on the calendar, it's time to prepare. Remember, your focus should be on learning about your target role at the company and determining the best ways to connect to new opportunities. Things you'll want to focus on include:

- What is the day-to-day like in the role? What is the team structure, how are priorities decided, what do they like about their work, and what do they struggle with?
- What skills and experiences do the hiring team look for? What is essential, and what is nice-to-have?
- Do they think your skills and background are a good fit for the role, or are there ways you can improve your candidacy through education or experience?
- What is the best way to monitor and apply for opportunities? Is there anything coming up that is not yet posted on the careers page?
- Are there any other people they can recommend that you speak with?

To inform your questions, you'll want to conduct thorough research on the person you are speaking with, the company they work at, and your target role. Consider the following sources of information:

- Your contact's LinkedIn profile, and any information it links to.** Look for information to inform your questions as well as anything that can help you build rapport, such as shared volunteering interests, hobbies, school experience, etc.
- Job descriptions for your target role at the company (if available).** During the conversation, you'll have an