

BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO NETWORKING.

This might surprise you: only around 40% of jobs are advertised! That means that the majority of jobs are filled without advertising – by word of mouth or by networking. Read on to find out how you can tap into this hidden jobs market.

1: What is Networking and WHY network?

Networking can simply be the passing on of information. You network every day, whether you realize it or not. When speaking to a friend you might recommend a film, a hairdresser,

Why network?

It's not always about asking for a job. Networking is a great way to learn more about a particular career. You could talk to someone, who is in a job that you want, or you can even network with an employer.

Why are so many vacancies unadvertised?

Advertising is expensive, and it takes a lot of time to sort through application forms and CVs, and interview candidates. Employers can get around this by promoting from within the organization or by employing people who have approached them directly. Some organizations actively encourage their staff to refer friends with suitable skills.

2: Where do you start?

It is quite natural to be a little anxious about networking if you've never done it before. But take an organized approach and try following these steps.

1. **Make a list of who you know** –including what position they hold and who they might know.
2. **Identify existing networks** – check out industry conferences, events and forums; join business networking sites such as LinkedIn; look for relevant groups and organizations on social networking sites including Facebook; you could even start your own network.

3. **Plan your approach** – if you're networking by phone or at a jobs fair, have a clear idea of who you want to talk to, why you are interested in the organization and why you're approaching them.
4. **Know your stuff** –when approaching an organisation, be sure to research what it does and what your contact's role is. Get to know the type of language they use in their line of work.
5. **Focus on what you can offer.** Before setting up a networking meeting, think about what you can do for the organization: you could offer to help out with a busy project they are involved in, or suggest a contact that might help their business.
6. **Tailor make your communication** – if you send out speculative CVs make sure they are tailored to the organisation and show how your skills are relevant. Don't send out the same version to all organizations.
7. **Get organized** –keep a book of contacts listing everyone you've spoken to, their contact details and their position. This can be very useful if your contacts get in touch at a later date.
8. **Be yourself:** there is no need to be an extrovert, just be politely persistent!

3: Who should I contact?

If you are just gathering information and advice you could chat to professionals on web forums, contact human resources/personnel departments and talk to contacts you already know.

If you're looking for a job offer, try to find out who manages the budget and makes the decisions about hiring at the organisation. This is more likely to be a head of department other than the human resources manager.

1.4: What if networking doesn't come naturally to me?

At first you might feel a little uncomfortable with the idea of making contacts to 'get something from them'. Try to look at networking as a two-way process – you can offer your skills and abilities in return for support and information.

Another common assumption is that you need to be an extrovert. Not true! You can continue to be yourself whilst networking but just let your enthusiasm and interest in the career shine through.

What if the contact isn't helpful?

Everyone gets knocked back at some stage. The contact you speak to may be pushed for time or not hiring at the moment. Thank them for their time anyway and ask if they can recommend anyone else that might be able to help.

If you are new to networking and get knocked back, try to think about how you could adjust your approach for future networking opportunities. Be objective about your own technique.

5: TOP 10 DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.

1. DON'T wait until you need a network to build one.

Networking is not something to do only when you need a new job or promotion. It's not something you can cram, buy or borrow the night before you need it. It must be a regular part of your life and activities as an ambitious, success-oriented person. Just like friendships, the most authentic and meaningful professional relationships evolve naturally over time.

2. DON'T overlook the obvious.

Too many people think that they have no network because they fail to "count" the people all around them. Your parents, siblings, cousins, neighbours, classmates, professors, career services staff and everyone else you know are all members of your network. In fact, one of the best ways to grow your network is through personal referrals from your friends and family.

3. DO make sure all networking relationships are mutually beneficial.

While you may feel you have nothing to offer more experienced contacts, you never know what you might be able to do for them. Simply ask any networking contact, "Is

there anything I can do to help you?” and see what happens. The best way to combat a discomfort in asking people for help is when they know that you’re always willing to return the favor.

4. DO become an active alumnus.

No matter where you go to school, alumni connections are among the most valuable you possess. This is because one of the keys to networking is having an affinity with the people you want to network with. Get involved now with networking events, fundraisers, online networks and other opportunities that will expose you to your school’s alumnus. And remember to help students after you graduate!

5. DO volunteer to build your network.

Volunteering is one of the most effective and most fulfilling ways to meet new people. Other volunteers and nonprofit staff will share the affinity of the cause with you and may be potential sources of job leads, career advice and mentorship. Most of these contacts would be happy to help a dedicated volunteer.

6. DO join industry associations.

Professional membership organizations exist to help people in an industry connect with each other. Don’t miss out on this instant community. When you join, be sure to subscribe to all publications and news alerts to be fully informed about events, mentoring opportunities and other benefits. Note that association memberships can be expensive, so always ask for student or entry-level professional rates when you join.

7. DO research before any networking event.

It’s great to sign up for lots of networking events, but too many students show up and say, “Well, here I am. I hope something really great happens!” You have to be more strategic. Any time you sign up for a conference, recruiting reception or other event, research the attendees and what organizations or topics will be discussed.

8. DON’T bail.

When you sign up for a networking event, go. You never know which meet-and-greet

may be the one where you make the connection that leads to your dream opportunity. You also never know who in your network might be in attendance and be unimpressed by the sight of your unused nametag.

9. DO follow up fast.

The best time to follow up is directly after meeting someone, while you're still fresh in his or her mind. Never forget that networking is about building and maintaining relationships. You can go out and meet dozens of people, but what's the point if you never keep in touch with them? Take the initiative and make the first move.

10. DON'T forget to say thank you.

Expressing gratitude when appropriate is one of the most important elements of professional networking. Send an email, e-card or handwritten note to anyone who provides you with advice, ideas, a referral or anything else. Never let a good, helpful deed go unthanked. Gratitude is an essential component of the best professional networkers and the best personal brands.