

Guide to Networking

Networking is what we do every day when we talk (or text or email), meet new people, and share information.

Networking for a job search is not all that different from what we do naturally every day. It is about building a group of people who know you and will help you if they can. If you ask the right questions of the right people in your network, you will discover new opportunities. And the best ones of all lead to a job that suits your requirements, gives you a better chance of success because it is not yet posted, and comes with an internal referral. Randstad RiseSmart recommends you spend 70% of your job search engaged in some form of networking - which includes lunch meetings and professional group outings, among other things, so it can be fun, too.

Where is Your Next Job Coming From?

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS: Reviewing, applying for and following up on posted job leads is one possible source of your next job (see Randstad RiseSmart's tips for online applications for more information). Keep in mind however, that of all the options available to you, this one has the most competition. On average, 200 people will apply for a posted job and only 4 to 6 will be invited to interview.

WORD OF MOUTH: When hiring managers have a position to fill, the first thing they do is ask employees and connections for referrals, often well before the job is posted. To have your name come up when the hiring manager starts asking for referrals, you need to network with people connected in some way to your focus (job title, industry, and geography). Even if those people are not the decision makers at your target organisation, a direct referral may be your fastest route to reach a hiring manager. Referred candidates were 2X as likely to get interviews and 40% more likely to be hired than other candidates.

NETWORKING WITH DECISION MAKERS: Show the hiring manager a problem, and embody the solution. By demonstrating a knowledge of a company's challenges and positioning yourself as a solution, you may show the hiring manager that they have a need for someone just like you (whether they previously realised it or not). People have landed jobs just because a hiring manager creates one just for them based on their strengths, expertise, and ability to provide a solution to a challenge.

The last two avenues have much higher rates of success than finding jobs through any other means. Only 14% of hires are made from job board postings, while 61% of hires are from company career pages and employee referrals.

General Networking Do's and Don'ts

Keep the following do's and don'ts in mind as you network with others:

DO:

PREPARE YOUR PROFESSIONAL VALUE PROPOSITION (PVP) Also called an 'elevator pitch,' your PVP is a powerful high-level summary of your background, strengths, and goals, which you can use to introduce yourself. It should be a minute or less in delivery length, as well as focused, concise, and practiced.

FOCUS ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND HELPING OTHERS Networking is NOT all about you. The best relationships are mutually beneficial, and it's easier to ask someone for a favour if they owe you one. If you are not sure

what to offer, you can help your contact with a LinkedIn recommendation or endorsement, an invitation to a networking event, an interesting article, or an offer to introduce them to someone.

ORGANIZE YOUR NETWORKING Keep track of what you and your contact spoke about and be sure to follow up appropriately. Use spreadsheets or LinkedIn as effective tools for managing your contacts.

THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT WHO TO NETWORK WITH Reach out to coworkers, vendors, suppliers, clients, acquaintances, consultants, school alumni, volunteering or hobby contacts, friends, family, neighbors, etc. Also, network outside of your current contacts: connect to interesting people on LinkedIn, attend networking events, join and participate in online groups, volunteer/consult, etc. Finally, network with recruiters, search firms and employment agencies. Not only might they be able to assist you in your search, but they will also offer their expertise on the job market.

SEND A NETWORKING NEWSLETTER Send a networking newsletter to your closest contacts (with your PVP!) outlining your current situation, your job search goals and target company list. Ask them for introductions to people they think would be helpful, or simply invite them to coffee or lunch to catch up.

DON'T:

ASK FOR A JOB Most people are not decision makers at their organisations and do not have the ability to offer you a job. Be creative, and find other ways to get value from your networking meetings, such as tips, resources, insight, and introductions.

SEND MASSIVE EMAIL BLASTS, CALL RANDOM PEOPLE, OR ASK STRANGERS FOR A JOB.

BE PUSHY OR DESPERATE There's a fine line between being politely aggressive and annoying your contacts - don't cross it. Calling several times when you haven't heard back from your contact is not OK. Asking for lunch with someone you've never met might seem a bit forward. Warm up your contacts slowly and follow up with permission.

HAVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS Don't expect someone else to find your next job for you or keep you in the forefront of his or her mind constantly. You are in control of every meeting and follow up. Not every contact will lead you to a job offer, but with a high volume of activity, your chances increase significantly.

FORGET TO FOLLOW UP Networking is not a hit and run. Developing relationships with contacts requires follow up, consistent relationship building, and reciprocation. Find ways to add value to contacts within your network. Make it a point to nurture your network now and after you land your next role.

Examining Your Network

Who will be most helpful out of your existing contacts?

- » People you already know
- » People who work in your focus industry or target company
- » People who may be in a position to refer you to someone else
- » People who might otherwise help you

Think broadly here; you never know who might lead you to your next job. Your Tier One Network can include former coworkers, previous managers, members of your school's alumni, family members, neighbours, or your child's best friend's parent. (The sky's the limit!) These are considered "warm" contacts.

Your Tier Two Network is people you don't know, but want to meet and build a relationship with. Members of your Tier Two Network may work at one of your target companies, be a manager who in a position to hire you, a recruiter specialising in your industry, or someone otherwise connected to your job search goals. These are considered "cold" contacts.

Ready to Start Networking

After you identify your networking contacts it's time to start networking. You can use LinkedIn to connect with them, you can call them or email them (see Randstad RiseSmart's Communication Templates Tip sheet for examples), or you can request a 20-minute networking meeting with them. This last idea is Randstad RiseSmart's recommendation: whenever possible, use the networking meeting to start new relationships as well as nurture old ones.

Conducting 20-Minute Networking Meetings

Below is an outline of how a 20 minute networking meeting should be structured. For more information, including example conversations, check out [The 20 Minute Networking Meeting: How Little Meetings Can Lead to Your Next Big Job](#). As you have these meetings, keep in mind that it is important to be prepared, respect other peoples' time, and be both thankful and gracious.

STEP 1: FIRST IMPRESSION (2-3 minutes) Arrive early, make light conversation with the gatekeeper, thank them, chitchat, and set the meeting agenda.

STEP 2: INTRODUCTION (1 MINUTE) Give your professional value proposition (PVP).

STEP 3: DISCUSSION (12-15 MINUTES) 5 questions

QUESTION 1 - 3: ASK 2-3 TAILORED QUESTIONS AND TAKE NOTES. HERE ARE THREE EXAMPLES:

- » I noticed on your LinkedIn profile that you keep very up-to-date with professional development. Which activities have had the most ROI for your career growth? Are there any you might recommend for my career path?
- » I noticed on LinkedIn that you spent 5 years in management consulting before moving into your current role. What was it like moving into, and out of, consulting? Would you recommend it?
- » I know that you previously worked for ABC Company, and I've been exploring opportunities with them. Would you recommend them as an employer? Do you have any insight into their unspoken preferences for job candidates?

QUESTION 4: ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THEM. HERE ARE THREE EXAMPLES:

- » Thank you, X, for being so helpful. Now, how can I help you?
- » I am planning the next event for our trade association, and I would love to send you a free ticket as a thanks for all your help today.
- » If you think of anything I can help you with please let me know. As a token of my appreciation for your time, I have attached this article that I think you will find interesting. This article is called, "XX" and it is a great follow-up to our conversation today.

QUESTION 5: REQUEST AN INTRODUCTION (DO YOU KNOW....)

- » Do you know of anyone from your work on the ABC conference who might be a good connection for me? May I

reference your name?

- » I noticed you have a great network from your time at ABC. Would you be able to recommend someone there to whom I can speak?

STEP 4: ENDING (2 MINUTES): End the meeting on time, thank them again, and ask to keep in touch.

- » Thank you so much for your time, I know you are busy, so will let you get back to your day. Thank you again for offering to introduce me to Y. It will be great to meet him. I will send that vendor contact list to you tomorrow as promised.
- » My time is up, X. You have been such a huge help. Thank you for meeting with me. To recap, I will send you the email address of that programming contractor I know. I think he can be a great help to you on your upcoming project. I am really grateful that you will keep your ears open for potential positions or contracting jobs for me!

STEP 5: FOLLOW UP Send a thank you, continue to offer value, and keep in touch.

NEXT STEPS

- » Practice hosting networking meetings with friends and family members
- » Prepare your networking strategy for both warm and cold contacts