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JOB SEARCH

# 15 Power Tips for Using Your Social Network To Find A Job

Sometimes, especially when it comes to getting your foot in the door to be considered for the best job opportunities, it's more about who you know than what you know.



**PAMELA SKILLINGS**

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By definition, “networking” just means meeting people through business and social projects and events and nurturing those relationships. Networking is a great way to make new friends and learn more about all kinds of fascinating topics. And for job seekers, networking contacts are also valuable sources of information on job leads and even introductions to hiring managers.

While it may not seem fair that connections are so important in getting hired, the fact remains that more people find job openings through personal contact than any other way.

## Get The Network

Your network can and should contain current and former co-workers, contacts from your school (students, professors, alumni), a wide range of people in your industry, and personal friends. If you have neglected networking in the past, there’s no time like now to get better connected.

### 1. Take time to socialize.

Your time is far better spent on lunch or coffee with contact than on surfing job listings. In fact, surveys consistently show that 80-85% of job-seekers find work as the result of a referral from a friend or colleague and only 2-4% of land jobs from Internet job boards.

### 2. Don’t be shy.

If you feel like you don’t have much of a network, you’re not trying hard enough. Sit down and make a list of all of the people you know (or know of through a close

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about reaching out to that passing acquaintance you met once or twice who worked with four years ago. However, a casual note via email or LinkedIn isn't very risky (so what if he doesn't write back?) and could lead to a great relationship.

*(Note: See **Use the Network** below for more on how to reach out to those in your network for advice).*

### 3. Treat people like human beings, not walking job leads.

This should be obvious, but most people don't enjoy being used. When you meet someone new or reconnect with someone you haven't seen in a while, focus on connecting as human beings first. Be natural and don't try too hard to sell yourself. The best way to connect with someone is to show interest in them and listen. Even better, offer something of value to the person you meet (suggest a restaurant, recommend a book, offer expert advice). Sure, it would be great if they could help you out at some point down the line. However, nobody wants to be pals with a tiresome opportunist.

### 4. Mix and mingle.

Attending organized events is another way to expand your network. Join professional/industry/alumni groups and attend the events most likely to attract interesting people. You'll also be able to find intriguing lectures, seminars, parties, fundraisers and other events through LinkedIn, Facebook, MeetUp, and lists like [Bernardo's List](#). Intimidated by the idea of cruising a networking event by yourself? See below.

### 5. Team up.

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to at least 3 new people at every event. If you go with a friend, work the room and introduce each other to interesting people that you meet.

## 6. Expand your horizons.

Don't limit yourself to just networking within your industry. Getting to know your hairdresser makes sense even if you don't want a job cutting hair, because she knows so many people. Hairdressers are often the first to hear about coming changes that lead to open positions. We all know people who are natural connectors — they throw the best parties and have the best stories. They also LOVE to make introductions to help out their friends.

## 7. Don't forget your business card.

Business cards are your passports to networking. Have a business card prepared that provides your contact information and a brief description of what you do, and be sure to have plenty on hand if attending an event. However, it's more important to collect business cards than to distribute them. Make sure that you have contact information so that you can reach out and continue the dialogue after the event.

# Use The Network

People in your network will be able to help you with your job search, but you must be mindful of how you approach them.

## 8. Ask for advice, not a job or a favor.

Start by requesting a brief meeting or phone call to ask the person's advice about career opportunities in the industry. Make it clear that your goal is not to beg for a job. This is particularly important when reaching out to people who don't know you

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contact is much more likely to think of you when they become an opportunity.

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## 9. Schedule informational interviews.

With contacts working in your field or at a target company, you may want to ask for a more formal informational interview. Follow our advice on [how to ask for an informational interview](#) and then [take the time to prepare for your informational interview](#) to make the best possible impression.

## 10. Ask for a job referral.

If you find out about an opening at a contact's company or former company, reach out to see if your contact has advice on the best way to apply. If you're lucky (and have done your groundwork by showing that you're a strong candidate), your contact may offer to pass your information along to the right person and bypass the resume black hole of unscreened applicants. This can make all of the difference in getting you to [the interview stage](#). Remember that this is a big favor — your contact will be putting his or her reputation on the line to vouch for you with coworkers. Make it as easy as possible for them by demonstrating that you will make them look good if recommended.

## 11. Ask for a job reference or a LinkedIn recommendation.

Everybody needs strong references to land a job offer. Make sure that you stay connected to the former bosses and coworkers that you want to use as references. After all, memories fade and you want your reference giver to be able to speak glowingly about all of your good points. It's also a good idea to ask for LinkedIn



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## 12. Look for ways to return the favors.

Remember that networking is about mutual support, not just other people doing you favors. Stay alert for opportunities to help others. Ask them about what they're working on and find ways to lend a hand — invite a contact to an interesting networking event, pass on the phone number of that reliable contractor or genius dermatologist, or just send a book or article about a topic of interest. And if someone asks YOU to [pass a resume](#) along or offer job search advice, remember that you're paying it forward!

# Keep The Network

## 13. Be grateful.

Most people are thrilled to help out their contacts if they know the effort is appreciated. Let your networking contacts know when their efforts have paid off on your behalf (through connecting with someone they introduced you to, landing an interview, or eventually getting a job offer) and thank them warmly. Thank them with lunch or dinner if you can. Be sure to send [thank-you notes](#) after you accept a position.

## 14. Keep a long-term view.

Don't expect business and social networking to be a quick fix for your job search. It can take time for relationship-building efforts to pay off. You need to put in the effort to get to know people, and trust that you will see results from it.

## 15. Stay connected.

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networking is not just about finding a job. Your contacts can be valuable in other aspects of your career and your life. And if and when it's time to start job hunting again, you will have a strong network to back you up.

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## Pamela Skillings

CHIEF INTERVIEW COACH

Pamela Skillings is co-founder of Big Interview. As one of the country's top interview coaches, she has helped her clients land dream jobs at companies including Google, Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, and JP Morgan Chase



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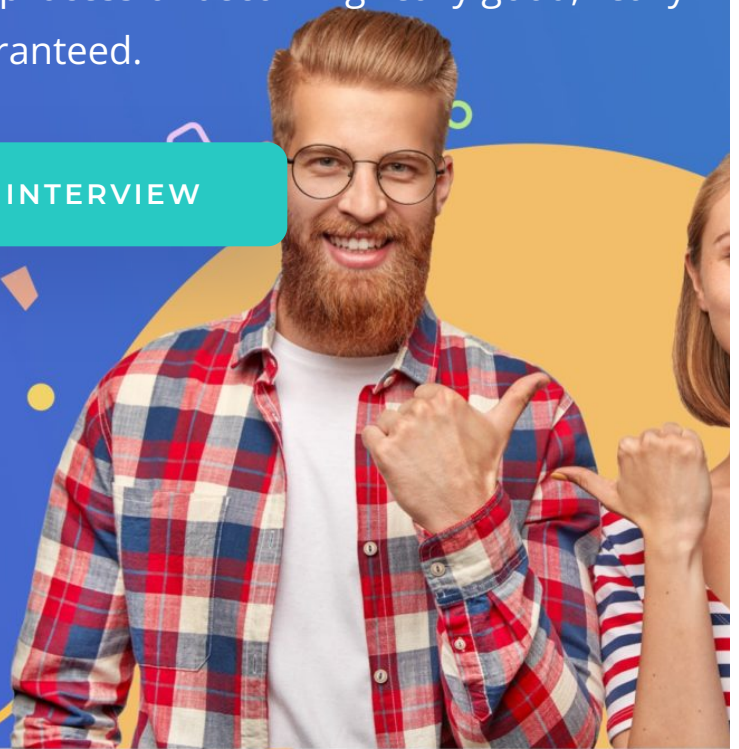
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