



## Networking

A network is a group of elements—or people—that share a common link. Many successful networks already exist in professional organizations where people share a common interest in their area of work. Networking, in its truest sense, is one of the most powerful ways to market oneself, products or services. It's a simple technique that provides an easy method of gaining information, advice and support. Use it to create business or personal referrals; for meeting people socially; or for serving the community.

Most employers prefer to hire people they know. This may be someone they know personally or someone introduced by a mutual acquaintance. Hiring new employees this way is easy and reduces much of the uncertainty. Depending what book or article you read, it is reported that anywhere from 60-80% of all people are hired through networking. Using the principles of networking is the most effective way to tap the hidden job market and find a new position.

Networking involves personally contacting friends, neighbors, teachers, family, or anyone else who can give you information about possible jobs in your field of interest. Simply ask for information about their career fields, and eventually about where positions may exist. Ask questions that get people talking about jobs and careers. Listen and take notes. Most people are happy to help! Ask questions like:

- Could I ask how you got into your career field?
- What things do you like best/least about your career?
- How would you suggest I prepare for a job in this field?
- If you had your career to do over, what would you do differently?
- What companies are best to work for and why?
- Who would you suggest I talk to next about a career in this field?



Start by contacting five friends. If each one refers you to three other people, you will have a network of 15 people, plus your original five friends, who can give you job-related information. Keep the network going by getting back to your friends to let them know what happened when you called the person they suggested. When people feel you make good use of their referrals, they tend to think of others for you to contact. Send thank you notes to everyone with whom you talk. After making a number of networking contacts and in-person informational interviews you will begin to find the things that most attract you to a given career and work setting. When this happens express this excitement to the potential employers. Tell them what excites you about the work atmosphere in their company, and ask, "Do you foresee having an opening in this area?" This is where job offers come out of doing informational interviews through effective use of networking!

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