

# NETWORKING & CAREER BRANDING GUIDE

Of all the tools you use in your job search, your network may be the most important. Personal contact often determines whose resumes are looked at first, or given preferential consideration. Throughout your job search you will meet many people and accumulate a lot of names and addresses. The more you build, nurture, and sustain these relationships, the more effective your job search will be.

Many of us have heard that the best jobs are never advertised, and this is true. When hiring, most organizations look first at people they know and those recommended by the people they know. Firms report that 40 -50% of all positions are filled by referrals.

Networking is a powerful way of building professional relationships. It is a process of actively fostering contacts and creating ways to disseminate information. This is why you need to learn to network.

## The Art of Networking

- 1. Target Your Search:** Before you start your job search process, do some research on the market. Choose at least two career targets that are realistic for your level of experience and qualifications. DO NOT communicate that you will accept "any job." If you reach a dead end with a target, you can always broaden or reformulate your job search target.
- 2. Look Everywhere:** Once you have job search targets, attend as many meetings, seminars, and events as possible in your chosen target areas. Choose class research projects in your chosen target areas. Look in the library and on the Web for magazines, journals, and databases with information, especially specific company and contact information in your chosen target areas.
- 3. Talk to Everyone:** Tell everyone you know that you are looking for opportunities in your target areas. Faculty, alumni, and fellow students are often good sources of job leads and industry information. They may not have direct knowledge of a target area, but may know a colleague or acquaintance who does!
- 4. Keep a Notebook:** It is easy to forget information that you receive from a variety of sources. Keep a job search notebook or database with all leads, contacts, and pertinent information on industries, companies, and general market trends. Write notes on the back of business cards you receive to remember what you discussed with that particular individual.
- 5. Follow-up:** The key to a successful job search is persistence. Try to keep in touch with contacts you have met during your education. Send your resume with a friendly note and a case study you may have presented on a company in their industry. Situations change and jobs may open up within their organization or they may hear of an opportunity through a colleague.

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## The Self Marketing Profile

A self marketing profile encapsulates who you are and what you have to offer the job market and can be used in a variety of situations. A self marketing profile should include:

- 1. Your skills:** Choose one or two skills which are most marketable in your chosen field. Examples of skill categories include: technical, analytical, organizational, communication, interpersonal, and leadership. Always be prepared to illustrate how you used your skills with stories from your work or academic experience.
- 2. Your knowledge:** You can have knowledge of an industry (banking), academic subject (Finance), region or culture (Japan), or organization/type of organization (military, non-profit, IBM). Your knowledge can come from professional, academic, or personal experience/background. For example, someone who worked in a family business during their formative years has knowledge of small business environments; someone who is an accomplished athlete may have knowledge of a particular sport (resulting in opportunities in sports management, equipment, events, etc.).
- 3. Your experience:** It is best to quantify experience in terms of years whenever possible. Experience can be professional, volunteer, internship, or entrepreneurial. For example, working for several companies in sales may be represented as "five years of progressively responsible positions in marketing/sales."
- 4. Your personal qualities:** "Show me, don't tell me". Always illustrate claims with examples from your experience such as "effective communication is key to my work at xyz company"

## How To Use Your Profile: The Sixty Second Sell or "Elevator Speech"

An "elevator speech" is a 30-60 second (about the amount of time you would have in an elevator ride) introduction that describes your career identity, status, and interests. It's the career-focused answer to the question "Tell me about yourself."

- I am a (professional/ student/ recent graduate)\_\_\_\_\_
- With experience in (roles/ capabilities)\_\_\_\_\_
- My strengths and interests include (unique activities and professional qualities)\_\_\_\_\_
- I have worked with/for (types of organizations/ industries/ fields)\_\_\_\_\_
- I am seeking an opportunity/ would like to learn more about/ have interests in\_\_\_\_\_

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**Follow up questions for your elevator speech (These questions are the core of any networking conversation):**

- Do you have any thoughts about what might be helpful for me to know or investigate?
- Do you know anyone who would be good for me to speak with about this?

## **Do's and Don'ts When Meeting with Contacts**

- DO offer any information, help and insight you can in return when meeting with a contact. Networking should be mutually beneficial whenever possible.
- DO thank the contact and make plans to meet again. Keep the contact aware of your future career moves and ask about their plans. This process of nurturing contacts will sustain and enhance your career.
- DO ask questions and draw information. Get feedback on your job-search plan, objectives and resume. Do ask for advice, particularly if the person mentions obstacles you might face in reaching your career goals. If the contact can't help you, ask for the name of someone who can.
- DON'T hesitate to contact others for fear of imposing or asking for help. Most people are happy to do something for someone else if asked. The mistake most people make is not preparing sufficiently for each meeting.

## **How to "Work a Room"**

Here are some tips to help you feel more at ease when mingling with large groups:

- Feeling uncomfortable is natural. Instead of thinking of the people at the party as strangers, consider everyone's common interests and it will make you more comfortable.
- The top two icebreakers are "hi" and "hello." (Accompanied by a firm handshake - avoid the squeeze. Small talk about subjects that you have in common is not shallow and can lead to more meaningful conversation. It's better to state the obvious than to stay silent and miss an opportunity.
- Have 3-5 topics prepared to discuss; anything from the national news to industry gossip to something interesting you've recently done. Spend some time catching up on these topics and have some opinions on questions to discuss.
- Make sure you Observe, Ask, and Reveal (OAR). Observing only is a monologue. Asking only is an interrogation. Revealing only is self-absorbed. To keep things going, ask open-ended questions starting with how or what rather than questions which may elicit yes or no answers only.
- Don't wait for a proper introduction. Prepare a 7-9 second rehearsed self-introduction and test it out on 3 people- be creative when writing it. Include an overview of your background and career interests.
- Business events for for meeting lots of people so don't stick to one person. When ready to move on, summarize the conversation, lean away a bit, mention that you look forward to seeing them again, smile, and walk at least a quarter of the room away.
- Arrive no more than 15 minutes after the event's start time. This prevents a problem of having to "barge in."