

NETWORKING YOURSELF IN TODAY'S MARKET

There was a time (a long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away) when looking for a job was a matter of reading the paper and contacting recruiters. Nowadays technological advances coupled with the unsteady state of the economy have made the situation extremely complex. The easy availability of the internet means that, not only does that job posting have the potential of being seen by millions of people, but hundreds of people will be sending their resumes for the same job.....sometimes instantaneously.

In order to be successful, the job seeker must make a sustained effort to supplement the paper, recruiters, and internet job postings. This paper is compiled with the intention of showing you how you can direct that sustained effort in a manner that will significantly increase your chances of success.

In reading through this material, always keep these thoughts in mind:

- 1) Looking for a job is a full time job
- 2) Most prospective employers will not come looking for you
- 3) Quite often the best jobs are never advertised
- 4) *Statistically, 65 -70% of all jobs are obtained through networking*
- 5) Your odds of obtaining a job simply by E-mailing your resume around are better than the odds of winning the lottery.....*but not much*

IF YOU HAVE BEEN LIMITING YOURSELF TO USING THE INTERNET FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH THERE IS A VERY GOOD REASON YOU ARE READING THIS PAPER RIGHT NOW. PAY ATTENTION!

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is a way of expanding your list of personal contacts so that you may get your information in front of people who might actually do something to help you. By personally contacting people you know, you can get yourself introduced to people whom you don't (yet) know, who can in turn introduce you to other people who can in turn introduce you to more people. If you are diligent in pursuing your networking, the number of people you will meet will grow incredibly the further you go.

But that is not enough. **NETWORKING IS ALSO ABOUT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.** The key to a successful relationship is communication. You not only want to meet new people, but you want them to remember you so that when they do hear of a job opportunity, you will come to mind.

We can group the networking effort into the following steps:

STEP1-PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

Before you set off on a journey, you need to know where you are going. What is it you really want to do? When someone asks you what you are looking for, “I don't know”, “anything”, or “whatever”, are ***not acceptable answers***.

You need to assess your financial situation. If money is going to be a problem, you need to budget your finances and plan for alternatives. The stress of an unknown financial future can affect your demeanor and can show in your interaction with others.

On the other hand, if money is not a problem, you need to define your passion.....this might be an opportune time to look for something that you would really enjoy doing.

STEP 2 -THE RESUME

Your job search will always require a resume. Put some real effort into developing your resume for it should describe clearly who you are and what you can do. In networking, the resume serves two purposes:

- 1) As an introduction - For someone who has never met you, a resume should make them want to meet you.
- 2) As a reminder - For someone who has met you and talked to you, the resume should inspire them to remember who you are.

STEP 3- THE TWO MINUTE DRILL

Call it what you want...elevator speech, self introduction, or two minute drill, you need to be prepared to answer the question “Tell me about yourself”.

If you are not prepared, this can become a rambling dialogue of personal trivia that adds no value to your effort and starts your meeting, whether it is a networking meeting or an interview, off on the wrong foot.

Spend some time writing this down and memorizing it, and limit it to two minutes. It should contain:

- 1) Something brief about your early life and education (10- 15 seconds)
- 2) Something about your early career, including accomplishments (15 30 seconds)
- 3) Your recent work history including two accomplishments (45- 60 seconds)
- 4) Your reason for leaving (5-10 seconds)
- 5) What's next (10 - 15 seconds) -tailor this to the particular situation

This step is **critical** for being prepared for your interview. If prepared properly, it will convey organization, competence, success, and motivation, all within two minutes.

It is also great for networking, because each time you personally network with someone you don't know, you are making sure you are not wasting their time with trivia and you are practicing for your next interview.

STEP 4- ORGANIZE YOURSELF

Right click on the "start" icon at the lower left of your computer screen. Highlight the "C" drive and set up a file folder called "Job Search XXXX" ("XXXX" = current year). Under this title, set up folders called "Resumes", "Contacts", "Resources"...and any other folder title that you may need to help you find things quickly. Then save everything you do and everything you find that will aid you in your search. (NOTE: I suggest folders for "Thank You Notes", "Cover Letters", "Research" & "Interview Prep Notes" as well)

We suggest that you set up this file directly below the "C" drive so that you can find it easily in the future. I know you don't intend to ever run into this problem again, but if you do, finding these resources will help you jump start your campaign.

Order some business cards; nothing cute, nothing fancy. Pick a shade and a font that shows your business sense. Put your name on the first line, your specialty on the second, and then put your contact information. Business cards add a touch to your campaign that says you are an orderly person with a good business sense. *Carry them with you always.*

Get yourself an inexpensive, approximately 9" x 12" leather or leather-like organizer (office depot, staples, Wal-Mart) that you can use to carry a pen & pencil, notepad, business cards, and copies of your resume everywhere you go. It should become an extension of your arm. This not only keeps all of your important networking and interviewing information right by your side, but it also gives you something to do with your hands when you network or interview. Also, a zipper helps to keep things from falling out while you are in the middle of an interview (very embarrassing.....trust me).

STEP 5- START MAKING LISTS

While you are relaxing and getting prepared to network, start compiling your list. Keep a pad of paper and a pencil handy for those moments when you recall another person you need to talk to. Any time you write someone down, also look up their phone number and E-mail address if possible.

Start with your church. Most churches have a pictorial directory and it always has been helpful to go through it and circle the people that I know and that I know might know of me. If you have friends who go to another church, ask to borrow their directory and go through it name by name looking for people you know.

Move to your circle of friends around your children and their activities. Go through the school directory and highlight or circle everyone you know. Don't overlook sporting activities...coaches, other parents.

Write down people you know from college, high school, business acquaintances, your banker, your broker, your accountant, plumber, etc.

Write down target industries that service companies you might like to work for.

- A. If you are looking for a job in accounting, you should target every CPA firm in town, not necessarily to work for them, but because they are doing tax returns and audits for every company in town and may know about job opportunities first.
- B. If you are looking for a job in marketing, do the same thing with advertising & PR firms in town.
- C. Contract attorneys also deal with many of the mid-size and larger corporations
- D. Insurance agents who deal in property and liability insurance are also involved with practically every company in town.

Make a list of companies that you would like to work for.

Create a form on your computer that will aid you in tracking your contacts. Look for the Excel file "Sample Phone List" in this folder; or use other resources, the important point is *be organized about tracking and following up with your contacts*.

This list will become your first level of contacts. They are the best place to start because they will be less threatening, will have a personal interest in helping you, and will give you a chance to practice your networking technique before you hit the big time.

STEP 6- NETWORKING

You are now ready to get down to business. Remember, there are some simple goals you are trying to achieve through networking:

- 1) You are trying to get your information into the hands of people who have jobs available, people who know about a job that is available, and people who might eventually know about a job that is available.
- 2) You are trying to get the greatest coverage possible, and
- 3) You want to be active on someone's mind if they hear about a job opening.

We are now going to break networking down into four steps:

- 1) The Contact
- 2) The Conversation
- 3) The Response
- 4) The Follow-up

THE CONTACT

Force yourself to make the call. Your first list is the easiest....friends you know. You don't necessarily need a face to face with friends you know well. Be upbeat about what you are doing and let them participate in your excitement. Tell them what you are looking for and ask them if they know anyone well-connected that you should talk to. Explain to them that it is not necessary for them to steer you to an open job right now, just to people who might know of open jobs from time to time. Be sure to get a number for any names you are given.

Go over your list of targeted companies & service companies and ask them if they know anyone who works at those companies.

Ask them if they mind you using their name when you contact the names they have given you.

Using the sheet you set up in “organizing yourself”, enter the names and numbers of the contacts you have just been given. These are your second level contacts.

Second level contacts may seem a little more difficult but not really. **ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THAT SUPPLYING NAMES IS USUALLY NON-THREATENING TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ASKED, AND MOST PEOPLE FEEL GOOD ABOUT HELPING YOU WITH YOUR REQUEST.**

The difference between a first level contact and all others is that your goal is to get a face-to-face meeting to discuss your search. Handling your networking by telephone may get you through your contact list quickly, but ten minutes after your call is over, you have been forgotten. The true key to networking is to build relationships with people who will keep you in mind for that time when they hear about a job opening that fits you. Your goal in networking with an individual you do not know is to:

- 1) Cause them to remember you when they hear of a job opening
- 2) Give them reason to refer you to friends or acquaintances
- 3) Give you names of other people who can help you.

Keep this in mind.....for whatever reason; you may not be comfortable soliciting a face-to-face meeting with someone you don't know. **TRY TO GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE. IT WILL BRING YOU GREATER REWARDS AND WILL BRING AN OVERALL IMPROVEMENT TO YOUR GENERAL LIFE-SKILLS.**

If you still feel that face to face networking is not right for you, conduct your interviews by telephone* and we will call this “Plan B”, below, as we give you ideas of what to say. At least give us the following two concessions:

- 1) When you have completed your interview and have secured several other names to pursue, mention that you are going to be out and about later in the day, could he spare a couple of minutes for you to hand-deliver your resume so he can put a face with it.
- 2) When you are several months further down the road and you still don't have your desired results and you are thinking about panicking, would you at least think about swallowing your pride and admit that maybe we knew what we were talking about in making these relationships more personal?

THE CONVERSATION

When calling someone you have never met, your conversation could go something like this:

"Mr. _____, my name is _____. I was talking to _____ and (s)he suggested that I talk to you. I have a background as a _____ and I am looking for _____."

(Try this) *"Do you have several minutes for me to come by, introduce myself, hand-deliver my resume and get some guidance on companies to target?"*

(or this) *"Do you have several minutes for me to come by, introduce myself, and get some feedback on my resume?"*

(or finally this) *"Do you have several minutes for me to come by, introduce myself and drop off a resume?"*

The response you get will be one of the following:

- A. "Not really"
- B. "Sure, Come on by sometime"
- C. "I would love to help you but I don't have any jobs available right now"....or...."I just don't have the time to spare"

If the answer is (A), switch to the direct mode; you can say something like,

"I don't know if you have ever had to look for a job in a bad economy, but it is quite challenging. One thing I am trying to do is expand my knowledge of the Tulsa job market. I specialize in _____ do you know of any companies that could use my talent or do you know anyone else I could talk to who could get me a little closer to my goal?"

If you still get a negative response, you have to quickly determine if this person is just pleasantly ignorant or if you are possibly getting on their nerves. If it is the latter, thank them for their time and move on. If it is the former, try this.....mention the list of companies that you would like to work for that you prepared in step 5 above (we know you have this list because you have been diligently following our directions up to this point). You might say something like,

"I would like to contact (name three companies) to see if they might be able to use someone with my talents. Do you know anyone that works at any of these companies?" Sometimes mentioning a specific company will jar loose a tidbit of information that could help.

If the answer is (B), say

"I know your time is valuable, so name a time that would work for you and I will be there."

If the answer is (C), say,

"Thank you, I can appreciate that. I am not just looking for a job, but I am also looking to get my resume in the hands of people who may hear about a job that is available sometime in the future. I want to get my name out in the market so that I will get a call when that time comes. Can I leave a resume with you and do you know anyone else I might call who might hear of jobs of this nature from time to time?"

Remember, you are still looking to personally hand them a resume, if at all possible. If they say "sure, E-mail one to me" respond with *"I will be glad to do that, however, I also know that my resume will have a little more value if someone can associate a face with it.....I'll be in the area (today/tomorrow), can I just come by and drop it off?"*

*Plan B (for those who feel that they just can't handle the personal aspect of our advice and are going to conduct their networking strictly by telephone)

A typical telephone approach might be

"Mr. _____, my name is _____. I was talking to _____ and (s)he suggested that I talk to you. I have a background as a _____ and I am looking for _____. Do you know of anyone who might be able to use my talents or anyone well-connected who might be able to direct me further?"

Remember, your goal is to get at least two more names and to get a resume into the hands of people who might hear of jobs available. You will either get a positive response that involves a little further conversation, a positive response that doesn't involve providing names, or a negative response. If it appears to you that the person on the other end is not put off by your conversation, you have to at least try to hand-deliver a resume. (How threatening can it be to walk into an office and hand someone a resume, especially if you have had a pleasant conversation).

When completing the telephone conversations in this section, keep the following thoughts in mind:

- A. Try to be up-beat, positive, and avoid any negative conversation.
- B. Fill in your telephone contact sheet after every call. If the person was not in, find out when they will be back and mark that on your sheet. Put anything interesting you got out of the conversation in the comments section.
- C. Try to avoid sending a resume without some form of personal contact. The half-life of an unpersonalized resume is about 5 minutes. If you do E-mail a resume to someone, be sure to read the follow-up section below to see how to keep that resume active in the hands of a recipient.

THE RESPONSE

Okay, so your initial conversation was a success and you are going to see someone. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- 1) This is, in reality, an interview....an informational interview, but still an interview. Dress appropriately. If you are looking for a white collar job, dress in a business manner (leave casual Friday dress for later, when you have a job). Remember, any time you are meeting someone for the first time; you never get a second chance to make a first impression.
 - a. Leave your nose rings & eyebrow rings at home
 - b. Cover up any exposed tattoos
 - c. Have a decent haircut
 - d. Shine your shoes, press your clothes
 - e. Pay attention to personal hygiene
 - f. Avoid heavy colognes or perfumes
- 2) Carry your organizer with you, and use it to take notes while you talk.
- 3) Open your conversation by using the two-minute drill explained above. This will keep you from rambling, will set the tone for the meeting, and will allow you practice so you are ready when you do an actual interview.
- 4) Be very aware that you are taking your host's valuable time....be respectful of that.
- 5) Be observant. Make some notes of what you see in the office (personal pictures, mementos. evidence of a hobby or a sports obsession. etc.)

- 6) Ask for their help or guidance.....a good place to start is to ask them to give you feedback on your resume. Take notes if you get some. Be sure to ask if they have any ideas of someone who could use your talents.....be sure to get names, numbers, and permission to use your host's name.
- 7) Leave a resume and ask them to keep it handy
- 8) Thank them for their time and tell them you will check in from time to time to let them know how you are progressing.

*Plan B (for those who are not networking personally)

If you get the opportunity to drop off a resume personally, pay attention to the tips listed just above. If you are E-mailing a resume, always personalize it with a cover letter. Have a standard cover letter written in Word (DOC not DOCX) so that you can personalize it and attach it with your resume. The cover letter should have an opening paragraph referring to your conversation, a body that focuses them on the more important parts of your resume, and a closing paragraph that asks them for their support and thanks them for their time.

THE FOLLOW-UP

This may be the most important part of networking and is the part most often overlooked. If you don't follow-up, you are like a duck hunter using a rifle....you will only get a duck that is sitting right in front of you, but forget the ones on the wing. You will only get a job if one is available when you call. You want to also be in the running for jobs that open up in the future that become known to someone in your network.....they have to remember you for that to happen.

First, if you have just personally visited with someone, you owe them a personal thank-you note. If you have legible handwriting, make it a short, hand-written note on a thank-you card. Thank them for their time and for the courtesy they have shown you. Ask them to please keep you in mind if they hear of something in the future that might be a fit. If your handwriting is something only a mother can love, send them a note on some personalized stationery saying the same thing. Make sure that you personally sign it. Send these off the day of your meeting, but no later than the morning after.

Second, for everyone who has given you the courtesy of their time, whether it is through a personal visit or a pleasant phone conversation, **re-call them every three weeks**. Remind them of your conversation, let them know that you have been following up on their suggestions (if you have had success getting contacts from their contacts. let them know that), and ask them if they have had any other ideas since your previous conversation. Whether they have any additional information or not, thank them for their time and ask them to keep your resume "warm".

You have just accomplished two things:

- 1) You have let them know you are serious about finding a job
- 2) You have let them know that you are still in the market

About the third time you re-call someone, their antenna will be up for you, because they will realize that you are persistent, serious, and someone they would feel comfortable recommending for a position they hear about. Whether they hear of a job at a casual party, over lunch with a friend, or in a phone conversation with an associate, they are more likely to remember you if you have been diligent about keeping up with them. **YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BY KEEPING UP WITH THIS STEP.**

Also remember to fill in your phone sheet after every conversation or call; this gives you a ready list for re-calls as well as a reminder of anything additional that came up as a result of your last conversation.

OTHER CLOSING THOUGHTS

There are other things you can and should do besides networking to look for a job, and here are a few that come to mind:

- A) **Recruiters** - It never hurts to contact several recruiters who specialize in your field. Employers these days do not often like to pay the high fees for placements when there is such a large supply of candidates, but some still do. Remember, there is no cost to you for using a recruiter, but the recruiter is also not working for you....they are working for the company that will pay them.
- B) **Newspaper Ads** - You should answer an ad that matches your qualifications. Just realize that the entire circulation of the paper is seeing the same ad, so your odds of getting a response are pretty slim...still, you have to try.
- C) **Company Websites** - Job postings on company websites are very good sources for openings. A job is posted on a company website after a company has scanned its data files and polled its employees for potential candidates. You should respond to these openings, but immediately get busy doing research on the company. You have to send your resume through proper procedures in order to be considered, but that does not mean you have to sit around and wait for a response. Using the internet and the network you have been establishing, try to find someone in the company who will be an advocate for your resume. HR will make their own decisions, but they may give your resume additional scrutiny if someone in the company asks them to. In any case, your resume and your cover letter both need to be in very good shape to get proper notice.
- D) **Internet Job Postings** – You may find something on Monster, Career Builders, or other internet sites, and you should respond. Just remember that even more people are viewing those sites than are reading the newspaper classifieds and the tools on the internet allow interested parties to get regular alerts, so the odds of getting noticed are even worse than the newspaper.
- E) **Social Websites** - LinkedIn is a site that needs your attention. Through Linked-in you can meet people who work in the companies that you might want to work for. You can throw out directed questions and search for individuals in a company. You can also search job postings, which are a little more private than open internet job sites. If you are creative, you can get a lot of information off of Linked-in.
- F) **References** - Along with preparation of your resume, you should prepare a separate sheet with your references. You should have at least three, probably no more than five. One person should know you well on a personal basis and at least one person should be able to respond to your work habits and skills. Include their title if your reference is in business. An ex-employer is great if you are on good terms. **NEVER LIST A PERSON AS A REFERENCE IF YOU HAVE NOT PERSONALLY RECEIVED THEIR PERMISSION TO DO SO, AND ALWAYS LET YOUR REFERENCES KNOW WHEN A COMPANY HAS REQUESTED THEIR NAME SO THAT THEY ARE EXPECTING THE PHONE CALL**
- G) **Prayer** - last, but certainly not least, solicit the prayer support of family and friends and God will reward you for your diligence and hard work.

Preparing the Two Minute Drill

Prepare a presentation that reduces your past and future into a two minute capsule

1. Brief statement about yourself, family, early life and college education
2. Early career with two or three key accomplishments
3. More recent work experience and key accomplishments. Be prepared; tailor these to the particular situation
4. Reason for leaving last company
5. Current Status
 - a. How come you're here
 - b. What are you looking for
 - c. What can you offer

10-15 sec	Personal Life and Education	Born and raised in... Graduated HS went to college
15-30 sec	Early Career	Out of college I... And accomplished...
45-60 sec	Recent Work History Key Accomplishments	More recently I have been at... Where I have been...
5-10sec	Reason for Leaving	Because of a major reorganization...
10-15 sec	What's Next	I'm here because... I'm looking for... I can bring ... To the party

This model should lead your audience to conclude about 12-14 positive things about you in two minutes. This is effective in networking as well as interviewing. Memorize it and deliver it with ease and energy!