

Tip of the Month

What's So Important About Networking?

The U.S. Department of Labor recently reported that at least 60% of jobs are gained through networking. Networking has traditionally been considered as a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest. Networking can also result in gathering information about current labor market demand that will be useful in the transition from one job to the next. The connections you make often lead to informational interviews or referrals for current openings. Two-thirds of managers use referrals first for hiring because they tend to reduce the risk for employers. Candidates who are highly referred are often judged more on their past accomplishments and future potential than on their skills.

In recent years, social media has become an increasingly effective method of networking. Although it is initially a less personal approach, social media allows job seekers to reach larger audiences by posting resumes and profiles that result in connections with new people who are able to provide industry and occupational information. When using LinkedIn you can find out who you are connected to and who knows someone in a company that is of interest to you. Once a connection is made, it's important to reach out in a personal way by talking on the phone, meeting in person, or communicating via email. A recent research brief reported that 80% of employers use social media for recruitment and 64% indicated that they've successfully hired using LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

Many job seekers have found that networking cards, in lieu of business cards, have proven to be yet another way of enlarging their network. A good networking card should be on quality card stock, have a good graphical layout, and clear font that displays contact information. The back of the card may contain a short statement describing the professional attributes of the job seeker.

Creating a networking strategy by making 2 contacts a day will result in 10 a week and lead to 40 per month. A good place to start is with 3-4 people who can vouch for your past performance and future potential. Ask these people if they will call 3-4 other people on your behalf or send an email introducing you. Connect with friends and family who may know someone who knows someone else in one of your target companies. Participate in networking groups, reconnect with professional associations, college alumni organizations, and social groups. Send a few emails each day to anyone who has helped you in any way in order to maintain and grow the relationship. Be direct, proactive, and pleasantly persistent.

According to Lou Alder, CEO and best-selling author of "The Essential Guide for Hiring and Getting Hired", "applying directly to a job posting should represent no more than 20% of your time looking for a job. 60% should be on networking. The other 20% represents a bunch of clever techniques to help your resume be found and get contacted by a recruiter."

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