

Action Networking Plan

- Consider your network...Everyone you know. Start making appointments for coffee to talk to people about them and their jobs. Do not limit yourself to people who think will help you. Have an open mind and meet with those you DO NOT think will help!
- Sign up for linkedin.com. Seek contacts to LIONs (Linkedin open networkers.) Connect with one or two. This will expand your network tremendously. Use linkedin to help you identify people to contact for informational interviews.
- Research organizations in your area that may have opportunities for you. Seek informational interviews with people in those organizations. NOT HR people – those who actually do the type of work you would like to do.
- Send or email your broadcast letter and follow-up asking for meetings.
- Remember that networking is about building relationships – consider what YOU can do for people. How can you help them? If you take an interest in giving rather than taking, your network will grow organically.

Read on for more about networking and informational interviewing:

What is Your Network?

Don't forget:

- Relatives
- Friends (especially those in the workplace)
- Friends of friends
- Former employers and co-workers (even out of town)
- Neighbors and acquaintances

Make a list of people you know. Cast a wide net.

Where/When should I network?

- Professional associations/conferences
- Work events and meetings, social and professional
- Social events
- Community events
- Elevators — collect business cards
- Airplanes
- Anywhere, all of the time!

Obstacles to Networking

I don't like to ask for help...

Many ask me, "Isn't this about "using" people?"

Networking is not about using people; it's about *plugging into the job market*. When you network, you are looking for information and advice from those who know it best. Most people can and will provide helpful answers to your questions and guidance, and are only too glad to do so if asked the right way.

I'm just not an outgoing person...

That's okay! You don't have to change your personality type to be successful at networking. The goal is to project a confident, articulate and professional demeanor. If you prepare yourself to be confident about your goals and skills, you should be able to better project confidence and professionalism in your own way.

Some Suggestions:

- Role play - Practice "working a room" and chit-chatting
- Prepare things to talk about in advance in social situations
- Have a list of questions or topics to discuss
- RESEARCH - What you need to know and who knows it?

What's the worst thing that can happen?

Maybe you'll encounter someone who won't want to help you. That's okay. Ideally, you'll ask them if they can suggest someone else who may be able to answer some questions for you. Most of the time, you will at least be able to get a referral from someone who isn't interested in helping! Don't let fear or shyness get in the way of your job search.

Shy Networkers

There are some terrific points for shy or introverted networkers on Lindsey Pollak's blog. In summary, shy people ask for personal referrals, tend to be polite, are good listeners, bring a friend to networking events and leverage their on-line contacts - all great indicators of a successful networker!

Practical Tips to Help Optimize Your Online Network

The possibilities to connect are endless: Blogs, networking sites such as linkedin.com and large and small social networks provide opportunities to "meet" professionals from every industry. How should you take advantage of the possibilities?

LinkedIn

This site is a goldmine of information, networking resources and potential job opportunities.

Industry Specific Groups

Consider joining several industry specific networking groups.

Etiquette

As you join social networks, chat rooms and groups, be sure to observe (lurk) before you chime in with your 2 cents worth. You will come across more professionally if you understand the etiquette of a site before you inject your opinions.

Don't forget that networking isn't only about what you can get from others. What goes around comes around - be sure that you make the effort to extend yourself in your networks. Help someone else! Provide a suggestion, a resource or an answer to a question. If nothing else, it is good karma!

Consider the following tips that apply both to on- and off-line networking:

- All leads are worth pursuing.
- Set networking goals. Prioritize and focus.
- Stay organized. Keep track of contacts, what you have learned and who referred you where. (This can be especially important in the online world, where networks will intertwine.)
- Research and be prepared.
- Always send a thank you note to everyone who helps you. Cyberspace contacts appreciate knowing they had a positive impact, even if their comments or suggestions were not targeted to you. If someone's blog or suggestion helps you, let them know!
- Write professionally. Spell check and use proper grammar.
- Be genuine, enthusiastic and confident in all networking communications.
- Keep adding to your contact list and continue networking, even when you have a job.

One of the best networking strategies is to conduct many informational interviews.

What is an informational interview?

This is just is a fancy way of saying a meeting with someone who may be able to share insights or information with you that could help in your job search.

- You seek out the contact and issue an invitation to meet.
- You conduct the interview. You ask the questions to help you learn about your potential career or organization.
- You decide what you need to know and tap the hidden job market.
- You draw conclusions.
- This is NOT a job interview.

Why do informational interviews?

Informational interviews are the best ways for you to learn about an organization and/or gain insight and expertise from a professional whose opinion you value. Other benefits include:

- Everyone you meet becomes a member of your network.
- Your job prospects multiply exponentially!
- You may discover jobs that are not publicly advertised.
- If you endear yourself to someone, they are likely to think of you if a job becomes available. People like to help others, especially if they had a good connection. The more strong connections you make, the more friends you have in your field.

How to get started with your Informational Interviews...

It is usually easiest to start with close contacts. Think about your network. Can anyone you know potentially put you in touch with someone who could provide useful information? Certainly consider using a service such as linkedin.com, which allows you to see the names of your contacts' links and request introductions, but don't forget your neighbors, relatives, colleagues and friends. Touch base with them to ask for suggestions of people to meet in a field you are pursuing.

Once you have a list of one or two contacts, e-mail asking for a meeting. Be sure to mention the name of the person who suggested you contact them. State that you would like to meet for coffee to ask for advice and information concerning their field or organization. Emphasize that you are seeking information, not a specific opportunity. (If you do this when you are employed, you have more credibility). In your e-mail, indicate that you will follow-up by calling them, and then do it!

You may be surprised, but most people will be willing to meet with you or speak on the phone. If, when you call, they refuse, ask if they can suggest someone else to meet so you do not lose the opportunity altogether

The Meeting

Confirm your appointment and meeting place a day or two in advance. Arrive early and be prepared. Unlike a real interview, it is okay to have a list of questions. Use a professional writing tablet and pen. As a formality, ask if it is okay to take notes.

- Have questions to ask and things to tell about yourself.
- Know your resume and skills and accomplishments backwards and forwards.
- Dress and act professionally.
- Research – know what you need to know and what you do know! Don't waste your time and theirs asking about topics that are clearly spelled out on their website, for example.
- Bring your resume, and when the time seems right, offer it to ask for their insights and feedback.

Obstacles

- Silences: refer to list of open-ended questions.
- Lengthy answers – If you are benefiting from information, let them continue. If it isn't relevant, or they seem to be rambling on, refocus the interview by stating that you don't want to take too much of their time and ask a different question.

Follow-up

- Always send a thank you note right away.
- Always ask if they can suggest another contact.
- Always ask if you can keep in touch and what is the best way.
- Keep track and follow up with your network. If Sue suggested you speak to Bob, and Bob winds up hiring you, make sure that Sue hears from you before Bob mentions it to her! You don't want anyone to feel that you "used" them – by following up and being appreciative, you'll garner good will.
- Organize your network and touch base regularly – once or twice a year. A holiday or New Year card is one great way to be in touch. Forwarding information or a topical article occasionally to members of your network who might be interested is another great way to remind them about you and your interest.

Work your net! It's the best way to find an opportunity!

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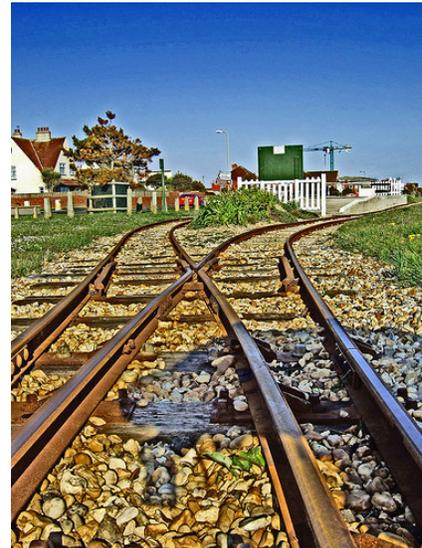


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2) Network generously. Think how you can help others instead of what they may offer you.

3) Optimize your online presence, but don't waste time zapping a lot of resumes to ads on large job boards. The possibilities to connect are endless: Blogs, networking sites such as linkedin.com, large and small social networks provide opportunities to "meet" professionals from every industry.

4) Customize your resume for EVERY job. It is worth your time. If you want to get your foot in the door, your resume must clearly outline how your skills and accomplishments solve a problem for the employer. It is your job to offer clear reasons to interview you.

5) Evaluate your interviewing skills. Are you selling yourself? Your resume got you in the door; the interview is your chance to show the employer that you really have what it takes to join their team.

6) Vet your references. They have the potential to seal the deal for you. Do you know what they might say?

7) Appearance matters. Cut your hair. Shine your shoes. Invest in a nice suit.

8) Don't let your job hunt consume you. Frequent exercise, support or networking groups and chocolate can be good stress relievers! Don't spend every minute on your job hunt. You still need to have a life! Plus, you never know - it could be someone you meet on a trip to the grocery store or a seatmate on an airplane while on vacation who winds up linking you to your next job!

9) Consider hiring a career coach. Would you set your own broken bone? Wire your own home for electricity? Do you cut your own hair? Most would say "no." The same standard should apply when job seeking. A professionally written resume will shorten your search and may qualify you for a higher-paying position.

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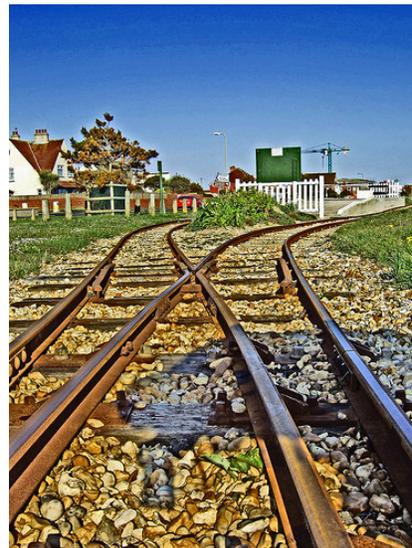


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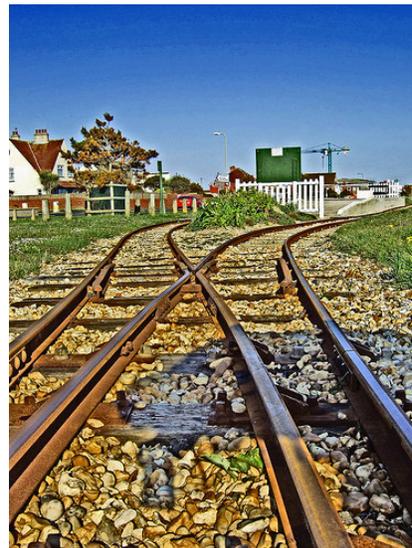


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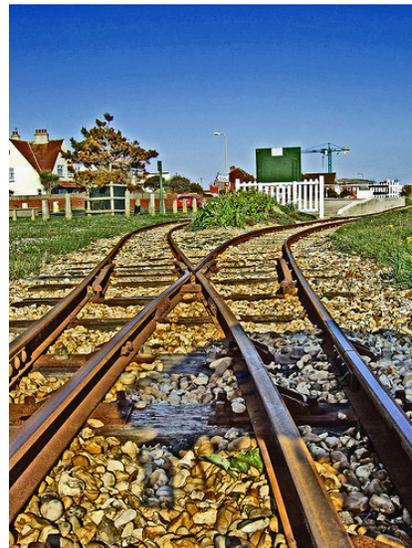


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