

St. Rita Employment Ministry

NETWORKING TIPS

Overview

Networking is a critical element to managing a successful job/career search. It allows you to be proactive in the search and to identify and apply for unpublished job openings (a.k.a. the hidden job market). Some experts recommend that you spend up to 75% of your time during a job search networking. The average person has 250-500 contacts and networking is about tapping into these people to let them know you are looking for a job, to ask them to help you increase your contact base, and to help you gain visibility with potential employers and find the right people to talk to. Networking is not about asking people to help you find a job; it's about reaching out to people for information, ideas, advice, and feedback. Instead of asking for a job, ask for companies who may be hiring and for contacts at these companies or names of people who might talk with you about these positions, functions, or firms.

Networking How-To's:

- Be professional – Prepare in advance so that you have appropriate contact information, business cards, resume, an elevator pitch, and a LinkedIn profile (see the Toolkit for Job Seekers for more information on these items).
- Know what you want – it's the only way people will be able to help you. If you don't know what you are looking for, it will be difficult for others to help you in your search and you'll end up frustrating them as well. Be specific about what you are looking for.
- Make a list of contacts - a spreadsheet works well but a list in a notebook will do the trick too. List everyone you know from all aspects of your life: school, hobbies, friends, family, church, past jobs, etc.
- Initial contact is usually best done by email or phone, with the goal of getting a face-to-face meeting.
 - Don't send your resume until you have had a chance to speak with the person.
 - If you don't get a response initially, don't give up. Most people are very busy so connecting can take 2 or 3 different tries.
 - For contacts you don't know, see if others who referred you to the person will allow you to use their names to create a "warm" vs. "cold" contact – e.g., "Sally Smith suggested that I contact you."
 - If the person won't agree to see you, don't give up. Ask if there are others who might help or be a more appropriate contact.
- If you are nervous initially, try using a script and include:
 - Reason for your call or email
 - How that person can help
 - Schedule a meeting

- Prepare a list of questions in advance of your meetings or calls that will keep the person engaged. Make them open-ended questions rather than ones that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.”
- Once you have set up a meeting, dress professionally and appropriately for it.
- During your meeting, focus on listening carefully to get information and find out people who can help. Also, ask for 2 or 3 other contacts who might be able to help you and ask for permission to use the referrer’s name in reaching out to these contacts.
- Keep detailed notes about each meeting you have.
- Send thank you notes to each contact who speaks to you and helps you out and stay in touch with them periodically.
- Follow up quickly and thoroughly on any contacts you gain.