

## **NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

### **“Failure to Network can lead to NO Work”**

The thought of networking can strike fear into the hearts of job seekers. But don't panic: networking is nothing more than *asking* the people you know to help you find out about the job market and meet the people who are actually doing the hiring. Mark S. Granovetter, a Harvard sociologist, reported to *Forbes* magazine that "informal contacts" account for almost 75 percent of all successful job searches. **Simply defined, networking means meeting with people to exchange information**

Networking is both **a technique and a process** centered on specific goals. When used wisely, it can be as focused and systematic as other, more “predictable” tools in your job search toolbox. As such, it involves **purposeful development of relations with others by connecting and interacting**. Its purpose is to exchange information and **to acquire advice and referrals**. This information will assist you in promoting your ultimate job search goal: getting job interviews and offers. **Through the process of networking you build, expand, and activate your contacts.**

Networking means developing and maintaining relationships with others. It involves staying in touch with people to keep track of new ideas, services, or job openings. Networking is most effective when done with persistence over a period of time. When networking works, it leads you from one contact to another. By all accepted measures, networking is the single best way to uncover promising job leads. **One of the best ways to identify members in your network is to develop a contact list. Begin by making a list of people you know.** This list will most likely include relatives, neighbors, fellow workers, former employers, alumni, friends, acquaintances, bankers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, classmates, parents of roommates, etc. Just about everyone you know, whether he or she is employed or not, can help generate contacts for you. Be persistent in your search for contacts. Go through your family's Christmas card list, alumni club list, and any other lists you can think of. You probably know more people than you realize.

Additionally, do not hesitate to talk to professors, friends, acquaintances, and neighbors about your job search. Be confident! **In reality, you are asking for advice, not charity**; oftentimes, you are simply asking them to “activate their antenna” with you in mind. **Most of the people you contact will be willing to help you, if only you will tell them how - through your focused, knowledgeable questions and willingness to listen.**

You will also want to zero in on other contacts within your career area. Your goal is to get referred to the person who has the power to hire you.

To make new contacts in your career area, use the following resources:

- ◆ People you know in the career or related area.
- ◆ Professional organizations, associations, or unions.
- ◆ Community service organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Lions, or Rotary.
- ◆ Department chairmen in your field at colleges and universities.
- ◆ Professional or trade magazines.
- ◆ Social Networking sites (Facebook); Professional Networking sites (LinkedIn, Plaxo, etc.)
- ◆ Google and other search engines – don't forget to investigate the links on sites with which you are already familiar.
- ◆ Directories at the library

## **Informational Interviewing**

Informational interviewing is really a subset of networking. You will need to contact your “person of interest” from your network and request to schedule an informational interview. You may do this via email, phone, or a handwritten note. You can suggest meeting for coffee, lunch, or other informal get together. Definitely plan to pay for this! During an informational interview you are deliberately seeking to:

- 1) Gather information about a specific industry, job, location or person’s experience
- 2) Understand how to effectively search for opportunities in your area of interest
- 3) Obtain referrals for expanding your network

During an informational interview, be sure to tell the person what you have done, what you want to do, and then **ask** for -- **and listen to** -- advice, ideas, and opinions. Remember, people generally like to talk about what they know, and almost everyone likes to share with someone who is interested, eager to learn, and full of well-thought-out questions.

### **Suggested Questions for the Informational Interview**

1. What does your job entail on a day-to-day basis? What is a typical day like?
2. How did you get to this point in your career? How did you happen to choose it?
3. What type of practical experience would you deem most important to prepare for a position like yours?
4. What undergraduate classes have been most valuable to you in your job setting?
5. What training and/or experience is required? What skills are needed?
6. What types of problems are you working on?
7. What do you find most appealing about the work itself?
8. What do you like and dislike about your career field, industry, or company?
9. What kind of people tend to do well in your job?
10. What entry-level titles would be advertised in a job posting for this type of work?
11. What salary range should be expected for a new employee in this type of work?
12. What professional associations or industrial organizations do you find helpful?
13. What is the current health of this industry?
14. What is the best way to enter this career field? How do people find out about these jobs?
15. What advice do you have for someone like me?
16. Could you give me the names of any other persons whom you think would be able to give me expert advice like you have? May I say that you suggested I contact them? *(It is very important to ask before using a consultant as a reference.)*

### **ALWAYS SEND A NOTE OF THANKS TO THE PERSON INTERVIEWED!**

While networking may ultimately lead to interviews and job offers, the purpose of networking is to get information, advice, and referrals. Regardless of how well you perform a job or write resumes and letters, networking should play a central role in your job search and career development. Getting a job is a people-to-people business. It requires knowing how to make contacts and build relationships with those individuals who can help you reach your job objective. Finally, keep in mind that networking is a two-way street. Be ready and willing to help someone else. Maybe, their child is interested in attending a Christian college and needs someone to talk with about his/her experience.