

3.4: Selling U - Networking—The Hidden Job Market

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of relationships and networking in your job search.

Did you know that 80 percent of jobs are filled through networking? Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 171. Networking is sometimes referred to as the “hidden job market” because many jobs are filled before they are ever posted. This is true now more than ever because of the challenging economy. Traffic at job boards like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and Yahoo! HotJobs is up 37 percent over last year, which means that companies are deluged with résumés. Despite the influx in résumés, companies are using more networking—traditional and online—to fill their open jobs. In fact, about 50 percent of Facebook’s new hires come from referrals from existing employees. According to Molly Graham, manager of Facebook Human Resources and Recruitment, “One of our main philosophies is to get smart and talented people. They tend to be connected.”

Zappos, a billion-dollar online retailer of shoes and apparel that was recently purchased by Amazon, has taken employee referrals to the next level and has implemented software that lets employees use their LinkedIn and Twitter contacts. The software uses an algorithm to identify people who might have a skill set and experience match for open positions and then allows employees to invite the prospective candidate to apply. Joseph De Avila, “Beyond Job Boards,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203872404574260032327828514.html> (accessed July 3, 2009).

So now you can see why networking can be a very effective method to potentially learn about or land the job you want. But you might be wondering where you start and exactly how you network effectively. Like everything else in selling, you need to develop a plan.

Create a Networking Plan

Before you start, it’s a good idea to review exactly what networking is and what it isn’t. Just as in selling, networking is about building relationships that are mutually beneficial; it is about the exchange of value between people, usually over the course of time. Someone might help you now, and you might help that same person or someone else later. It requires a relationship and ongoing commitment. Networking isn’t a quick, easy way to get a job. Although it can be instrumental in helping you get a job, it isn’t easy, and it might not be quick. You should approach networking for the long term and realize that you will help some people and some people will help you. You have the power to help other people and to ask for help; that’s how networking works. To help guide you, here are six power networking tips.

Power Networking Tip #1: Network with Confidence

Don’t think of networking as begging for a job. Start building relationships with people—family, friends, professors, and executives—now. That will give you the opportunity to build relationships and potentially help someone even before you begin your job search. When you do begin networking to find a job, be yourself and get to know as many people as possible using the methods described earlier in the chapter (e.g., professional organizations, events). Keep in mind that you may have the opportunity one day to help the person with whom you are networking, so network with confidence. Meredith Levinson, “How to Network: 12 Tips for Shy People,” *CIO*, December 11, 2007, www.cio.com/article/164300/How_to_Network_Tips_for_Shy_People?page=1 (accessed July 3, 2009). You will be surprised at how many people are willing to help you because you ask. The fact is people *want* to help you; they want to see you succeed.

Power Networking Tip #2: Join Professional Organizations

There’s no better place to meet people you want to work with than to go where they go. Professional organizations such as your local chapter of Sales & Marketing Executives International, American Marketing Association, Entrepreneurs Organization, Public Relations Society of America, and others provide the perfect environment to meet people in the industry in which you want to work. Start by exploring the professional organizations on campus. Many are local chapters of national organizations designed to encourage students to get involved. If you don’t know which organization is best for you, ask a professor; she will be happy to provide some insight. Or go to a meeting and check it out; most organizations allow nonmembers to attend at least one meeting or event at no charge. A good number of professional organizations offer student membership rates that are designed for student budgets. Besides providing an excellent method to network, being a member of a professional organization also enhances your résumé.

But don't just join—get involved. You can impress people with your skills, drive, and work ethic by getting involved in a committee, planning an event, working on the organization's Web site, or other project. It's a great way to build your experience and your résumé and impress prospective employers. At the same time, you can be developing professional references to speak on your behalf.

Power Networking Tip #3: Create Your Networking List

Networking, like selling, is personal. So make a list of all the people you know with whom you can network. Don't disqualify anyone because you think they can't help. You never know who knows someone who might be the link to your next job. Follow the same strategy for your personal networking as you would use for networking for selling: write down the four Fs—friends, family, friends' family, and family's friends using a format like the example shown in Table 3.4.2. Howcast, “How to Network,” video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9VUqB7wQpY> (accessed July 27, 2009). But don't stop there; include your manicurist, insurance agent, hairstylist, and anyone else with whom you have a relationship. Don't forget to visit your school alumni office. It's always easier to start networking with people with whom you already have a relationship.

Table 3.4.2: Sample Networking List

Name	Relationship	E-Mail	Phone	Date of Contact	Follow-Up Date
Manny Romeo	Dad's friend at Crane, Inc.	mromeo@craneinc.com	616-787-9121	March 4	Need to touch base again at end of the month
Marie Jennings	Mom's friend	mmjennings@comcast.net	616-231-0098	March 6	Early April (April 6)
Jamal Isper	Dad's friend at Polk & Polk	jasper@polk.com	791-887-9091	March 10	March 17
Shalee Johnson	Hairstylist	Not available; will talk to her on my next appointment	616-765-0120	April 7	To be determined based on first contact
Rajesh Sumar	Director of Alumni Relations at school	Rajesh.sumar@university.edu	891-222-5555 ext. 2187	March 12	To be determined based on first contact
Annette Roberts	General Sales Manager, Castle Controls	Annette.roberts@castle.com	888-989-0000 ext. 908	March 12	To be determined based on first contact



Figure 3.4.1: This video gives you the highlights of how to network.

Source: Howcast Media, Inc.

Power Networking Tip #4: Know What to Say

Everyone tells you to do networking, but after you create your list, what do you say? You will be delivering your brand message to everyone with whom you are networking, so be specific about what you are looking for. Always take the opportunity to expand your network by asking for the names of other people whom you might contact. For example, assume you are networking with Vera, a friend of the family:

You:	I really enjoy marketing and advertising. In fact, I'm looking for an internship at an advertising agency in account management. Do you know of anyone who might be looking for an intern for the summer?
Vera:	I don't really know anyone at an advertising agency.
You:	Thanks. I was wondering if you might know anyone who might know someone who works at an advertising agency.

You will be surprised at how many people may be able to give you the name of someone you can contact. Not everyone will give you a name, but if you don't ask, most people won't think about whom they might know.

You might also network with someone who gives you the name of someone to contact. For example,

You:	I'm going to graduate from State College in May with a degree in business administration. I really enjoy the idea of helping people increase their company's sales, so I'm looking for a job in selling. Do you know of anyone who might have an opportunity in sales?
Jon:	Have you talked to anyone at Universal Parts? They have a great training program, and the sales reps get a company car. You might want to touch base with Chris Reddy, who is one of the sales managers. I can give you his contact information.
You:	Jon, I really appreciate your help. Can I mention your name when I contact him?
Jon:	Sure. Chris is a great leader and is always looking for good people.

When you contact Chris Reddy, it's best to make contact by phone, if possible. That way you have an opportunity to create a relationship (remember how important relationships are in selling, especially when you are selling yourself). A phone call might start like this:

You:	Hello, Chris. My name is Rakeem Bateman. Jon Keller suggested I give you a call.
Chris:	Hello Rakeem. Jon and I have known each other for several years. How do you know Jon?
You:	I met him at a Sales & Marketing Executives International event last week. He was one of the speakers. I enjoyed hearing what he had to say so much that I stayed to talk to him after the event. I'm going to graduate from State College in May with a degree in business administration. I really enjoy the idea of helping people increase their company's sales, so I'm looking for a job in selling. Jon suggested that I touch base with you to find out if Universal Parts might be looking to expand their sales organization.

If someone has referred you, always include that as part of your introduction. If your networking takes place via e-mail, you should do the same thing. When you send your résumé to someone with whom you are networking via e-mail, it's best to include your three bullet points from your cover letter as the body of the e-mail (review the *Selling U* section in Chapter 2). That allows the

person to whom you are sending the letter to see at a glance that he wants to open your résumé. In most cases the person to whom you are sending your résumé is forwarding it to someone else. Writing a short, easy-to-skim note helps tell every recipient what you have to offer. For example, see Figure 3.4.5 for a sample e-mail to Chris Reddy.



Figure 3.4.5: Sample E-mail for Networking

You can see that when you are networking you want to focus on being specific about what you are looking for, asking for names of people with whom you might network, and creating a relationship with those people.

Power Networking Tip #5: Online Professional Social Networking

Social networking sites can be a more powerful job search tool than most people realize, and their power can go both ways: The sites can work in your favor, but they can also work against you. When you're preparing to apply for jobs, keep in mind that a growing number of employers search social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace to weed out applicants who might not fit with their company culture. In fact, 22 percent of employers claim to use social networking sites when considering potential hires, and of those employers, 34 percent said they chose not to hire a candidate based on the information they had dug up about that person online. Mike Hargis, "Social Networking Sites Dos and Don'ts," *CNN.com*, November 5, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/11/05/cb.social.networking/index.html> (accessed May 16, 2010). One human resources manager based in Seattle, says she has turned down an otherwise promising job candidate's application on a number of occasions after visiting the applicant's networking profile. "Sometimes there are compromising photos or videos posted out there where anyone can find them," she says. "When that happens, those applications go right in the trash." Elizabeth Lee, personal communication, June 26, 2009. You can find out all kinds of things about a person from his MySpace profile that you couldn't necessarily learn from his cover letter or résumé! As social networking expert Patrice-Anne Rutledge says, before you go on the job market, make sure you "get rid of your digital dirt." In particular, look through any videos or photographs you may have uploaded to your profile, any Web sites you may have linked to, and any personal information you reveal that may be controversial or reflect on you in a negative light. Mike Hargis, "Social Networking Sites Dos and Don'ts," *CNN.com*, November 5, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/11/05/cb.social.networking/index.html> (accessed June 25, 2009).

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Clean Up Your Pages

“Get rid of your digital dirt” Mike Hargis, “Social Networking Sites Dos and Don’ts,” *CNN.com*, November 5, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/11/05/cb.social.networking/index.html> (accessed June 25, 2009). now, before you even start applying for jobs. Your Facebook or MySpace profile could negatively impact your chances of getting a job at your chosen company. Gauge the appropriateness of the videos, photographs, and comments on your pages and decide whether it would be a problem if a potential employer saw them. Many employers *will* search your social networking profiles to learn the things your résumé and cover letter don’t reveal.

On the other hand, professional social networking sites are tools you can leverage to great advantage in your job search if you use them proactively. LinkedIn is the biggest and most frequently used networking site, but there are a number of others, including Jobster, Ryze, ZoomInfo, and Plaxo, that allow you to create a professional profile and find contacts in your target industry or at target companies. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 134. Although it’s easy to create an account on these sites, you won’t get the full benefit unless you do two things: make the effort to keep your profile up-to-date and make the effort to grow your network. Here are a few social networking tips to keep in mind:

- **Make yourself stand out.** Think about the skills and qualities that make you unique. What sets you apart as your own distinctive brand? Your online networking profile should reflect this. Don’t just reproduce your résumé; make your profile into your “elevator speech,” highlighting your interests and using power words to describe your experience and talents. Your network profile is searchable on Google, so give some thought to the keywords you use to describe yourself. Diana Dietzschold Bourgeois, “Six Steps to Harnessing the Power of LinkedIn,” *Magic Marketing USA*, January 7, 2009, <http://magicmarketingusa.wordpress.com/2009/01/07/linkedin> (accessed May 16, 2010).
- **Publicize your profile.** LinkedIn allows you to search your e-mail address book for contacts that also have accounts, so you can easily grow your network. You should also be willing to ask people you know in your industry, including professors and mentors, to join your network. These people are well connected and want to see you succeed. In addition, you can start using your LinkedIn profile badge on outgoing e-mails, and, if you have one, on your Web site. When you publicize yourself this way, people will start linking to you. Diana Dietzschold Bourgeois, “Six Steps to Harnessing the Power of LinkedIn,” *Magic Marketing USA*, January 7, 2009, <http://magicmarketingusa.wordpress.com/2009/01/07/linkedin> (accessed May 16, 2010). Many companies and recruiters are accelerating their use of LinkedIn. “We could not believe the candidates we got” from LinkedIn, says Scott Morrison, director of global recruiting programs at software giant Salesforce.com. Matthew Boyle, “Enough to Make a Monster Tremble,” *BusinessWeek*, June 25, 2009, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/09_27/b4138043180664.htm (accessed June 25, 2009).
- **Ask for recommendations.** As you begin to build a professional network online, you can use it the same way you would use a regular social network. Ask people for recommendations of your work and for referrals to new contacts. Maybe a former professor knows the marketing manager at a company where you want to work; ask her to introduce you. Making a request like this can be terrifying at first, but have confidence. Keep in mind that your professors, mentors, and fellow professionals *want* to help you, and when they can help you, they *will*. But you won’t get the help if you don’t ask for it.
- **Join groups.** Start by joining *The Power of Selling* group on LinkedIn. Sites like LinkedIn have thousands of groups that are specific to interest, location, hobbies, and industry. Join your local professional group—the Chicago Sales and Marketing Executives group, for instance—and join your school’s alumni association. Your alumni group is an extremely important connection to make because people are almost always eager to help their fellow alumni succeed. But don’t stop there; search for other groups that are in the industry you want to pursue. You can just listen to the conversation and then jump in when you feel comfortable.
- **Create content.** Think about when you are considering making a major purchase. What do you do? You probably conduct research online to determine the pros and cons of each alternative. Employers do the same thing, so be sure your profile is compelling and up-to-date. In addition, use your social networking pages to create content to demonstrate your skills. For example, write a blog and link it to your Facebook page or post tweets on Twitter about a project on which you are working, a topic about which you are passionate, or even your job search. Get people to follow you and engage in the dialogue. Direct them to your personal Web site, samples of your work, or the content you have created. Social networking gives you the opportunity to show and sell with content that you create.
- **Search the social networking job boards.** More and more employers are using professional social networking sites to post jobs and seek out prospective employees. Matthew Boyle, “Enough to Make a Monster Tremble,” *BusinessWeek*, June 25, 2009,

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/09_27/b4138043180664.htm (accessed June 25, 2009). It's worth your time to review the job postings using the appropriate keywords.

Power Networking Tip #6: Follow-Up

It might seem like networking doesn't always work. It's good to keep in mind that networking is all about exchange of value. Sometimes, you may not find people who want the value you have to offer at the time you are offering it. Don't be discouraged. Follow-up is important in every part of your job search, so follow up with everyone with whom you network. Sometimes, people are simply distracted or overwhelmed at the time you first contacted them. Or sometimes their situation has changed, even in just a few days; you won't know this unless you follow up.

It's best to follow up by phone within one week of a contact. It may seem easier to follow up by e-mail, but you increase your likelihood of being successful and building a relationship when you follow up by phone. Don't simply leave a voice mail message as it is unlikely that someone will return your call. Continue to call until your contact answers the phone, or leave a voice mail and tell her when you will call back along with your e-mail address. Then, call back when you say you will. You will be pleasantly surprised at the results.

Keep in mind that networking is an ongoing process, whether you are looking for a job or not. When you establish a relationship with someone, keep in touch with her. You should touch base with people in your network at least once every four to six weeks. It's good to call to catch up, but an e-mail can be just as powerful. Send a link to an article or video that you think she will like. It's a perfect reason for keeping in touch and helps establish you as someone who delivers value, even when you are not looking for something.

Key Takeaways

- Creating a networking plan will help make your networking efforts more effective.
- **Networking** is about exchanging value, not collecting business cards. It's best to begin networking even before you are looking for a job so you can get to know people and provide value to them; it will help you when you begin your job search.
- Always network with confidence. You are not asking for a favor—you are simply tapping into a reciprocal business practice.
- It's a good idea to create a networking list including friends, family, family's friends, friends' family, and everyone else you know. Write down their names and contact information so you don't miss anyone.
- Practice what you want to say when you network with people. It's best to be specific about what you are looking for and always ask for another person with whom you can network.
- Online professional social networks such as LinkedIn, Plaxo, and other networking sites including Facebook and Twitter can help you expand your network and build relationships with many people who might be able to help put you in touch with the right people.
- Your social networking pages represent your personal brand. Be sure that all words, pictures, and videos are appropriate for prospective employers to view.
- Follow-up is the key to making networking work; don't assume that because you haven't heard back from someone that he doesn't want to talk to you. Take the time to follow up within one week of every contact.

? Exercise 3.4.1

1. Choose one of your classmates. Review his social networking pages and do a search on major search engines to see what his personal brand communicates online. Is it appropriate for a prospective employer? What changes would you recommend?
2. Create your networking list. Identify at least fifteen people that you can contact about your internship or job search. How can you expand your network to include twenty-five people?
3. Assume you were at a campus networking event and met someone who works at a company where you would like to work. What would you say to her to try to learn about potential opportunities with the company? If she said nothing was available, what would you say to be able to contact her at a later time?
4. Review your LinkedIn profile and identify ways that you can stand out. Ask a professor or other professional to give you some feedback on your profile and other professionals you can add to your network.

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