

5.2.18: Strategies for Networking

Learning Objectives

- Identify strategies for networking



In the context of career development, networking is the process by which people build relationships with one another for the purpose of helping each other achieve professional goals.

When you network, you exchange information:

- You may share business cards, résumés, cover letters, job-seeking strategies, leads about open jobs, information about companies and organizations, and information about a specific field.
- You might also share information about meet-up groups, conferences, special events, technology tools, and social media.
- You might also solicit job “headhunters,” career counselors, career centers, career coaches, alumni associations, family members, friends, acquaintances, and vendors.

Networking can occur anywhere and at any time. In fact, your network expands with each new relationship you establish. And the networking strategies you can employ are nearly limitless. With imagination and ingenuity, your networking can be highly successful.

How to Get Started

We live in a social world. Almost everywhere you go and anything you do professionally involves connecting with people. It stands to reason that finding a new job and advancing your career entails building relationships with these people. Truly, the most effective way to find a new job is to network, network, and network some more.

Once you acknowledge the value of networking, the challenge is figuring out how to do it. What is your first step? Whom do you contact? What do you say? How long will it take? Where do you concentrate efforts? How do you know if your investments will pay off?

For every question you may ask, a range of strategies can be used. In the video *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, Hank Blank recommends the following eight modern and no-nonsense strategies:^[1]

1. **Hope is not a plan.** Turning new or old acquaintances into your career network is not using people. It is what you do when your friend wants to supplement income by walking dogs and then your cousin's mother goes to Aruba and needs a dog walker for two weeks. You could not do this without knowing about each of these people's needs, so share your needs. Have a plan for who you would like to know.
2. **Keenly focus your activities on getting a job. Use all tools available to you.** An acquaintance does sound like someone you met at a friend's party last weekend, but acquaintances are much more than that as you grow your network. Start with friends, but then move to very directed activities. Perhaps you are hoping to work for the new hospital that is being built down the street. Have you considered attending a hospital fundraiser or volunteering at the Information Desk? With both of these activities, you help the hospital while increasing your odds of meeting someone new who will value your skills and refer you along. This section talks more about the many ways you might develop your network.
3. **You need business cards.** Have you done the thing where you share information by tapping phones? Maybe you have friended someone to share contact information. Remember that you want to stand out and be easy to find as you build your network. Use all your tools, and one important tool is the business card. Given a lifetime of work, it's inexpensive and easy to create a business card on nice card stock. Several online services allow you to create a card to your specifications and then order as few as 250. Sharing a card does not require technology, which is an added benefit. A really nice feature of

these cards is that with a few pen strokes, you may add a personal note to help your new acquaintance remember who you are and where you hope to be.

4. **Register your own domain name.** While this networking idea may be a stretch, why not? In some industries (especially creative fields that require an up-to-date portfolio) this might be a must and for the rest of us, who knows what the future may bring as we try to stay on the top of others' minds. If you cannot register for a domain name, you should at the very least claim an email (and social media accounts) that clearly reminds others of your name (e.g., Connie.Lynch@email.com or @connielynchmarketing).
5. **Attend networking events.** Many networking events do not charge at all. Some start with your membership in an organization or an invitation by a member. If this is your area of work or career, why wait to join? These are your people doing what you want to do.
6. **Master LinkedIn because that is what human resource departments use.** These tips are "for students," but all career people are aware of LinkedIn. It is a recommended site, but you may or may not choose to use it, based on your needs and comfort level. See the LinkedIn for Students website.
7. **Think of your parents' friends as databases.** Perhaps many of us were eager to step into independence from our parents as we move into our own homes and have our own families. We might wonder how that "other" generation can understand us and our needs. Networking is about sharing with all based on the assumption that as we help others, they will help us. Who might be the most willing to help us? Family. Surprisingly parents (children, cousins) have relatives who work at interesting places. Besides, who is most likely to brag about you?
8. **Create the world you want to occupy in the future by creating it today through your networking activity.** Much of networking seems about "who can help me." It is important not to be a user but to be a person others want to know. For example, if you're a real estate agent, you may suffer through many networking events where you want to flee after hearing that no one has any intent to move. However, you must realize that networking is not about what someone *does* for you but about getting to know one and other. As you make yourself memorable and become a good resource for others, they will remember you and put you together with appropriate opportunities when they arise. You never know when your business card will float up from the bottom of someone's briefcase just at the moment your particular skills are called for.

? A Caution for Networking

Networking should never be thought of as "what they can do for me?" Networking is two-way business relationships. Listen to others and offer help where you can. It is rare that the one you ask for help or advice has just the answer you need. That one you just asked may know someone who knows someone. As you listen, see where you may help others.

Sources for Developing Professional Networks

The bottom line with developing professional networks is to cull information from as many sources as possible and use that information in creative ways to advance your career opportunities. The strategies listed in the section above provide you with a comprehensive set of suggestions. Below is a summary of sources you can use to network your way to career success:

Meet-up groups	Conferences	Special events	Technology tools
Social media	Career centers	Alumni association	Professional organizations
Volunteer organizations	Internships	Part-time job	Job club
Networking events	Magazine articles	Web sites	Career coaches
Headhunters	Career counselors	Family members	Family members
Coworkers	Vendors	College professors	Advisers
Classmates	Administrators	Coaches	Guest speakers

1. Blank, Hank. *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, <https://youtu.be/TDVstonPPP8>. Web. 10 July 2018.

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