

Jump Start Your Network with these Tips

1. **Create a list** of people using the categories below. To keep track of the information use the worksheet “*Network Contact Sheet*”. Remember to make notes about the information that you uncover during your networking sessions. You will also want to keep a record of correctly spelled names, titles, phone numbers and emails, and dates. Start your network by contacting people in the following categories:

- Alumni
- Acquaintances and friends
- Church members
- Community business people
- Former Classmates and/or college professors
- Former co-workers and/or bosses
- Members of professional or social organizations
- Neighbors
- Politicians
- Relatives

2. **Have a clear goal in mind**

Whether you’re attending a networking event or making “cold calls” you must have a clear goal. That goal is your reason for attending the event or making the call.

Suggested Goals

- To make people aware that you are looking for work
- To find out if the employer of interest has openings?
- To meet someone in particular at the event?
- To meet people in your field of interest?
- To set up an informational interview to find out more about a particular field or job hunting strategies
- To ask for a job
- Instead of asking for a job, to ask for suggestions about how to approach your job search

3. **Use your Elevator Speech**

If you’re apprehensive about meeting new people it helps to prepare an elevator speech. An elevator speech is a 30 second clear, concise and

compelling presentation of who you are and what you do and why anyone should care!

Creating an elevator speech may take several drafts, practice, and time before you are able to craft a speech that best describes you. Your speech should answer the questions:

- Who are you?
- What do you do?
- Why should I care? (or WIFM, What's In It For Me)

Write out your answers to each of the questions making sure that you cover at least one, but no more than two strengths or accomplishments total. Edit the answers to make them more concise. Remember why it is called the elevator speech because you should be able to present yourself to a prospective employer in the time it takes to ride the elevator to the next floor. 30 seconds is the recommended amount of time but don't get hung up on the time issue if your speech is 25 or 41 seconds long. The message is the important point. The aim of your elevator speech is to get your foot in the door by starting a conversation, and with a bit of luck engage someone enough to want to continue the conversation with you.

4. Create a list of questions in advance that serve as conversation starters. The questions should be open ended, that means questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. Here are some examples:

- What kind of work do you do?
- How long have you been in that field of work, or position?
- How did you get into that field?
- Did you always want to become a _____ (profession)
- Do some parts of the job come naturally for you?
- What do you like most about your job?
- Do you have a role model or mentor?
- Do you see yourself retiring with your current employer?
- Do you see yourself retiring in this field or are you thinking of trying something different?
- What would you do differently if you had to do it all over again?
- What do you do in your spare time?

5. Sharpen your listening skills

Successful networking sessions involve listening to what the other person is saying, regardless of whether or not they are talking about what is of interest to you. It is not all about you. Listen. Don't try to dominate the conversation in order to get the information you are seeking. Every

successful conversation involves 2 or more people sharing information, asking and answering questions.

Here are a few listening tips:

- Don't interrupt to make your point. Allow the other person to finish their thought before responding?
- Listen while the other person is speaking instead of trying to think of what to say next
- Ask clarifying questions to make sure that you understand what the person is saying
- Show genuine interest by making eye contact while the other person is speaking

6. Follow Up

Always follow up with persons of interest within a few days to continue developing the relationship. A short email or phone call thanking them for the lead or just thanking them for an enjoyable conversation should suffice. You may have to reintroduce yourself and mention how/where you met to jog their memory. If that person gives you the name of a business associate, ask permission to use their name when you contact the business associate, and then follow up as soon as possible.

More Networking Tips

- If you are attending an event try to start a conversation with someone who looks friendly or who makes eye contact with you or who looks as uncomfortable as you do and work from there.
- Networking is not about meeting more than one person and then calling it a day.
- If you are shy or fearful give yourself time after trying it a few times you will be able to get over your fear of rejection or embarrassment. The practice will be helpful when you begin interviewing.
- Begin with people you already know, family, or friends etc.
- Don't think you will be able to meet the right people, or gather all of the information you need from a few attempts at networking. It may take some time but don't give up.
- It's unrealistic to think that people will give up valuable names and information after one conversation with you. You will have to develop that type of relationship over time.
- Set aside time to network by maybe calling a person each day or attending an event weekly. As time goes on you will learn which events are the most profitable and which ones to pass over.
- Not everyone will offer useful information or be willing to help but don't let a few rejections stall your progress.
- Don't think of networking as an inconvenience. It's well worth the investment of time to have a strong network to call on throughout your career. Remember, 80% of most jobs are found through networking. You do the math!

Networking is not.....

- about gathering a lot of business cards. Having a big stack of business cards in your desk is no prize!
- seeing how many people you can meet. Quality not quantity is the key. Take time to meet people and get to know them. It's a two way street. You may be able to help them in some way.
- begging everyone you meet for a job
- about meeting a bunch of people and calling it a day. It is about getting to know people in your line of work.