

# "Networking for IT Professionals"

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Networking is an important part of today's IT world. With the market in the shape it is in it is estimated that 70% – 90% of the jobs people are hired for are due to them knowing someone in the company. Even though the last two years have been more difficult than we have seen in a very long time it is important to remember that business ebbs and flows occur every couple of years normally so networking is a good practice in both good and bad job markets.

Below is a compilation of tips and ideas that can be used in your networking efforts. They are all standard suggestions that you will hear from a combination of sources, such as, networking groups, companies that work specifically with downsized workers, and many other sources that are available in today's world.

Use them to help you get started, find the job you want, gain experience in meeting and communicating with new people and hopefully have some fun while you are doing it. Good luck in your search!

## **Tips for Job Search and Networking:**

### **Getting started**

- Define what you really want to do, where you want to do it.
  - Job type – Industry – Company – Location
- Print business cards. They can be easily printed at home with a business card package bought at any store that carries supplies like this.
- Start listing the people that you know and where they work. Make calls to people you know first so you can feel more comfortable with contacting people initially.

### **Balancing between doing too much and doing too little**

- No matter how many contacts you have if you skim over the top of each of them and don't allow people to get to know you you aren't accomplishing what networking is about.
- If you can't keep track of your contacts or can't keep up with making calls consistently then you have too many contacts. Don't remove any from your list but focus on a smaller subset for some period of time to establish better contacts.
- Consider the extra stress you could be adding to your life when you continually look at a list of contacts that you can't possibly contact.

### **Dealing with contacts**

- Leave messages at night for people you want to call the next day.
  - It will prepare the person you are calling. Make sure you clearly leave your name, who referred you, a time frame for the callback, and your phone number. It may help some people to call you back at their convenience and will give you a better feeling to know that the person is more willing to help you by making that call back.
  - It will force you to make the call since you made the commitment, especially if you wake up the next morning with the 'I don't want to have to call a stranger to ask for a job' feeling.
- Establish at least one contact that you can sit and visit with, without just talking about your search. Remember you are not only missing a job but the social interaction that you find at your job.

- Balance between people in your situation and people that are working. There is a different energy flow within each group and both are important to experience.
- Be polite and determined to use suggestions and contacts. People will feel less obligated to help someone if they aren't polite, don't appear to want to use the information that was given to them or gives the impression that they expect their contact to do their networking for them.
- Send thank you cards. The fact that you would go to a store, buy cards, stamps, and take the time to write a note is very important to some people, will make them feel special, and will show your thoughtfulness.
- Attend networking groups. You will feel like you are not alone and you can make contacts within the group.

### **Track your contacts and time**

- Track your contacts and time to measure your progress and success.
- If you don't make progress one day then pick yourself up the next day and move forward. Don't let your tracking work against you and give up if it looks like you haven't been making progress.

### **Dealing with the stress**

- If you are feeling particularly stressed for the day
  - Do your networking in the morning and take the afternoon off. You won't feel guilty that you didn't do anything for the day and you will get away from it for a couple of hours.
- Plan to get your hours in within a four-day week and then spend Friday on education, volunteer work or something that will still contribute to your networking but will be less stressful.
- Join an organization
  - Make sure it is right for you regarding location, meeting times, goals.
  - Be prepared to stay with it after you get a job.
- Volunteerism-why you should do it
  - Networking opportunities.
  - Gets you involved in something other than job search.
  - Keeps you busy.
  - Learn something new by volunteering for something you haven't done before.
  - Test your abilities by doing something new or something you haven't done for a period of time.
- Exercise – It doesn't have to be formal exercise, just get up and move around or go outside and walk, etc.

### **Suggestions for contact conversations:**

- General
  - Introduction – Let the person know who you are and how you got their name and number.
  - What is your role in the company?
  - Can you tell me a little bit about the company? Are you happy there?
  - Do you have advice on how to pursue opportunities at the company?

- Would you be willing to submit a resume for me?
  - How do you suggest I pursue it?
  - Is there a specific HR person to call?
  - Would you be willing to check the internal postings and send them to me?
  - If there is a position would you consider helping me get to the hiring manager?
  - Would you suggest other contacts I am call?
  - May I stay in touch with you? – (suggest a timeframe-monthly, etc. )
- Specialized for project management (as an example to focus your contact conversation)
    - What types of projects do you manage?
    - How many projects does each person deal with in your group?
    - What does a project manager do in a day?
    - Budgeting is something I haven't done a lot of. Could you suggest a way for me to gain those skills?
    - What do you look for in a project manager?
    - Are there special keywords to use on a resume?
    - What type of progress tracking do you use?
    - What type of problem tracking do you use?
    - Is a project mgr the same across different industries?
    - Is PMI certification something I should pursue? Is it a requirement for your company?

### **Resumes**

- Match key words with ads.
- Use different resumes for different positions/ads.
- Spell check it.
- Cover letters, keep them short and too the point.

### **Interviewing**

- Talk to your resume in an interview.
- Be able to answer any question or topic on the resume.
- Decide whether you process things and interact better with people in the morning or afternoon then set interview times for your best performance.
- Take your time to answer questions. A thoughtful answer after a short delay is better than a bad answer.

### **Re-transitioning back into the work force**

- Plan for the transition to be able to easily move your network from 'need a job' to 'let's stay in touch'.
- Carry forward the positives from your experience.
- Maintain your network.
- Stay involved in organizations or groups you joined during your search.
- Help others.