

Smarter Job Search Workshop Series:

Networking In Person, By Phone, and Online

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For the Boulder Writer's Alliance

★ When we say Networking, what comes to mind?

NETWORKING MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND. It is the way stuff gets done, especially in the situation of job search. In case you don't follow, here's an unofficial attempt to define the word "network" as a non-computer verb: network (nĕt' wŭrk) v. The fine art of gabbing with others until you get what you want. At this you may shudder and mutter to yourself, "Ugh, gabbing with people until you get what you want. That sounds intimidating and/or manipulative. Isn't there a better way to get stuff done?" In a word, no.

★ Why Network?

People really do love to talk, so much so, in fact, that some say our species has been misnamed, that it should be Homo loquens rather than Homo sapiens. Combine the gab factor with the fact that people know stuff. Most people you meet during the course of an average day are incredibly rich sources of valuable information - they know about people, places, and things that can't be discovered any other way.

Therefore, if you want something, just talk to as many people as possible about it, and you'll get it, usually sooner than later.

And if you're in a job search, it's vital to understand that more than 75% of people get their jobs via networking. That's more than every other method of connecting with a job combined. Pretty good reason to start running your mouth more, isn't it?

★ How does one Network?

First off, it's important to understand that networking is all about give and take, about relationships, if you will. At the very least, you are giving attention to the other party, who in turn gives attention to you, unless the other party is some sort of attention-starved megalomaniac. At best, you are exchanging valuable information as well as the encouragement to use it well.

Networking by Objective

You can network to get information, even if that information is just confirmation of something you already knew. You can also network to get introductions to other people who can help you get what you want.

Most people who network are buying, selling, or both. By buying, I mean networking to get information on resources they need. By selling, I mean networking to get publicity, sales, or work. I suppose a few people network who are neither buying or selling, they just enjoy meeting people or like to be a resource for others. Your networking objectives should come clearly to you when you're in job search mode.



★ Is your Message Clear, Concise, and Compelling?

Things to Ponder:

1. What do you want to do?
2. What is your unique value in today's job market? Why would employers choose you over a similarly qualified candidate?
3. Will people get and remember your message? Are all the elements of your communications program cohesive, consistent, and compelling? Get opinions on your Sound Bytes, Business Cards, Resumes & Cover Letters, Image, Interview Style

Sound Bytes

So you've begun gabbing with someone. Once the attention is turned to you, you had better make an impression if you plan to get anywhere. In networking, it's vital to have a crisp, clear, and most importantly, concise message to relate when it's your turn to gab. Yet many people flub it when it's their turn due to a lack of preparation.

This crisp, clear message is what I call a sound byte, or what others call an elevator speech or a 30-second commercial. Whatever you call it, if it's done well, you'll do well. So tell me...in 30 seconds, can you clearly and persuasively communicate who you are, what you want, and why you deserve to have it, without any static? And can you tailor that little speech to the situation? Don't be fooled, 30 seconds is a short amount of time, which means it takes a significant amount of preparation, refinement, and practice to make it work well.

★ Where can you Network?

People seem to think there are special, magical places one goes to network. Not really. You can network in the comfort of your own home. You can also network at your neighbor's house, at the homes of family and friends, at the grocery store, at the gym, at work, at the park, at a sporting event, at the gas station, on the golf course, at the county fair, at a 12-step support groups, at the doctor's office, at a wedding, at school, at the veterinarian's office, in an elevator, on vacation, in cyberspace. Anywhere you can communicate with others, you can network. And yes, you can certainly network at business meetings, professional conferences, trade shows, job fairs, and other events designed for the exchange of business and information.

★ Networking Live – Working the room at a Networking Event

If you're going to be an effective networker, you need to know how to make an impact. While you're in a conversation, maintain direct, focused eye contact (no looking around your contact to spy other targets). Smile, nod, interject politely, to let them know you hear them. To keep the flow of information going, stay open-minded and keenly interested throughout the conversation. If you're given a bit of advice or a contact, write it down whether you plan to use it or not – it's a huge ego boost to the advice-giver and it will make them want to give more.

Now of course, in a networking event, you need to spread yourself around a bit. No, you don't need to rub elbows with absolutely everyone in the room. I think it's reasonable to try to meet six to ten people in one evening. Any more than that, and you're really not going to have time for a meaningful, memorable exchange. Since you don't have all night to spend on one conversation, you need to have a graceful exit strategy. Look for a lull in the conversation, then smile and say firmly something along the lines of "Well it was great meeting you! Thank you for the information, and I will follow up with you soon! Have a great night." Then move on.



★ *Icebreaking Ideas*

The fine art of small talk doesn't always come easily. Planning and practice will help. At your next networking event, practice initiating conversations with five people. Prepare some topics in advance. Here are a few ideas to get the ball rolling.

Try to ask creative, open-ended questions, questions that use who, what, where, when or how. Stay away from questions that can be answered with a simple Yes or No.

New to town questions:

I see so many dogs here in CO -- is it pre-req to own one to live here?!

Can you believe the beautiful weather we've been having – is it always like this? Where I moved from recently...

We recently bought a pop-up camper to explore the area. Do you know of any good camp sites?

What restaurants do you recommend in the Denver metro area?

General questions:

What do you do for fun?

I'm always looking for something new to read. What is your favorite quote/book and why?

Do you happen to have a favorite local charity? I'm trying to find a great place to volunteer in any local organizations?

With summer coming up, I've been thinking about vacations. What's your favorite destination?"

I'm thinking of going to a movie this weekend, have you seen any good films lately?

What brought you to this event?

Where else do you normally network?

How did you get started in your business?

What do you like best about what you do?

What's the best thing to happen in your business recently?

Share / exchange a useful resource.

Have you heard of LinkedIn?

Do you use Craigslist?

What's your favorite online research tool?

Did you check out the Gold C book this year?

What other networking events do you go

★ *With Whom Can You Network?*

A common objection to networking is the old "I've just relocated and don't know anyone in the new city." The other common objection is "I already asked my network for help."

In the case of being new in town, this is more an advantage than a problem. You can network with people you've just met even more easily than you can with people who have been taking you for granted for years. Saying "I'm new in town" tends to elicit more helpful behavior from the locals.

Anyone who can communicate at an adult level is network-worthy, in my opinion. My neighbor Laura is sharp 80-something who never worked outside the home. Is she network-worthy? You bet! If I wanted a job, she'd be one of the first people I'd go talk to. Why? She has family and friends nationwide, knows literally hundreds of people, what they do for a living, and more often than not, she has their phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses handy. If I told her I was looking for work, she would be more than happy to put in a good word for me if I asked her to.



★ When Should You Network?

When you're in a good enough mood to pretend to be in a fantastic mood. NOT when you need to whine or vent. After that condition has been met, you should be networking throughout each business day.

Approach networking with a 'Giving First' attitude. Network, of course, when you have a need. Network just as much or more when you don't. A good networker strives to connect people even when it doesn't offer a direct benefit. If you're a good networker, people see you as a valuable resource. This means they will come to you first when an opportunity arises, rather than never thinking of you at all. So keep on networking after you're in your next assignment.

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★ *The Oath of the Professional Networker*

- I am unfailingly polite, courteous, and gracious in all my interpersonal interactions.
- I am more often than not upbeat, enthusiastic, and good-humored.
- I am an excellent listener and note-taker when someone is giving me advice and information.
- I refuse to appear irritated, impatient, or dejected when things don't go as quickly or well I'd hoped.
- I always return calls right away but don't notice when others fail to do so. The responsibility for calling back is always mine.
- I write thank-you notes for all favors granted and keep people 'in the loop'.
- Whenever I hear the word "no," I don't take it personally or assume it means something negative about me. All it means is "not right now" or "I'm not sure" and therefore I ask for feedback, advice, referrals, or permission to stay in touch.
- I remember the golden rule and pay it forward, helping others with networking requests even when I'm pretty sure they can't or won't return the favor.

★ *Networking on the Phone*

Scripting: The first step is to capture the attention of these hard-to-reach people with effective communication. So keep the conversation crisp and accurate. For this, you need to have a script ready. What's a script? It's planning what you want to say. Jot down points to state your point. But don't read out. Make it sound perfectly natural with your script in front of you.

Points to remember while scripting:

The most important step in scripting is to know what the purpose of your call is. Are you seeking information? Are you presenting your qualifications? Start by introducing yourself. Make your point and grab the attention of the person at the other end. State your objective and finally close the call after you get what you want.

Basic principles of telephone communication:



Practice, practice and more practice. Remember Rome was not built in a day! Try practicing with a friend. Learn to deal with voice mails. However boring it may seem to be talking to a machine, it is important that you learn to leave polite messages on answering machines and voice mails. Make sure you call from a quiet place and call only when you are ready with your script and job search notes.

Most importantly, learn to listen. Listen carefully. If there are any objections or answers that can end the call, be a little persuasive. Be persistent and have a scheduled time for the caller to call you back or for you to call him/her back. This way you won't have to wait endlessly for a call that may not come.

★ *Overcoming Common Phone Issues*

As you may already know, using the phone to advance your job search is not an easy matter. On the surface, it seems easy. That's the problem ... if you treat the phone as if it were simply an extension of your voice, you will not make a lot of progress. Here are some of the normal stumbling blocks encountered while using the phone to make "marketing" calls:

- Problem: It is difficult to build rapport on the phone because you do not have the ability to see or use body language.

Solution: Don't let this stop you from using body language (even though you may look rather strange to those near you). Sometimes getting your whole body involved as you would in person does indeed help you make a point, because it adds much-needed emotion to your voice. This will make the difference between being excited about something and truly sounding excited.

- Problem: It is entirely possible that you can accidentally intrude on someone at an inconvenient time, and not even know that you are doing so.

Solution: Make a habit out of checking on this in the first moments of your phone conversation. For example, "Do you have a brief moment for a question, or am I catching you at a bad moment?" So many callers to our office assume that they can launch into a 10-minute introductory statement just because someone answered the phone!

- Problem: Many scientists find that they cannot communicate complicated information as well on the phone as they can in person.

Solution: Don't bother with the complicated information. Develop a succinct manner of presenting yourself and your accomplishments, one that whets the appetite to learn more (which written communication or a later face-to-face meeting can take further). Learning to speak in "sound bites" is essential when communicating by telephone.

- Problem: Communicating without distractions is much more difficult on the telephone than in person.

Solution: Don't make important networking calls from the lab. Find a quiet place, and clear the desk for your conversations. Don't have anything in front of you except your notes for this particular call and a pad of paper. Make sure that everyone in your proximity knows that you are not to be interrupted.

★ *Phone Scripting 101*

Have an objective for the call. You may be seeking information, trying to schedule a meeting or presenting your qualifications to a potential employer. Have a secondary objective. Often you won't achieve your primary objective, but every telephone call is an opportunity to solicit information. Know the name of the person to whom you wish to speak. If you don't know the person's name, then obtaining it becomes your first objective.

Outline in writing what you want to say. This is important in the early stages of cold calling or when the call is very important. Later on, you'll script most of your calls in your head. Practice!! Telephone skills, like all skills,



have to be practiced to be mastered. Start with low-risk calls. Practice your presentation with a friend and read your script out loud. Don't read your script. Your presentation should be natural.

The script will depend on the goal of the call and whether you know the person you're calling. A good script should include the following:

Introduction--Tell the person who you are.

Lead statement--Make a quick statement designed to get the person's attention.

Body--State your purpose for the call.

Close--Accomplish your goal, ask for information, schedule the meeting, etc.

Script for Requesting Contact Information

- Caller--Hi. This is Jerry Job. I'm trying to contact the person in charge of marketing. Who would that be?
- Receiver--That's John Smith. He is the director.
- Caller--I need to contact him about some marketing concerns. What's his direct number?
- Receiver--His direct number is 555-5555. Would you like me to transfer you?

Script for Follow-up Information

- Caller--Hello. This is Jerry Job. I interviewed for the computer programmer position last week. I'm just checking to see if the hiring decision has been made.
- Receiver--Not yet. We anticipate making our final selection this Wednesday.
- Caller--Great! I'm very interested in the position. You're doing some very innovative multimedia work that's on the cutting edge of today's technology. And it seems you have a bright and energetic technical staff that understands the importance of team production. I'm sure we'd work well together. When should I follow up with you?

★ *Golden Rules for Working the Phone*

Now that you understand and appreciate the basic weaknesses of the telephone as a tool in the job search, I'm sure you also realize that nothing can replace it. It is essential. But there are some additional cautions that need to be taken into consideration in order to maximize the positive benefits of this communication. Here's my list:

1. Wear a smile on the telephone-- they may not see it but they'll hear it.
2. Be nice to gatekeepers.

As you know if you have already begun your networking, it is very difficult to get information from receptionists or secretaries of important people. I have always called these folks "gatekeepers," for that is what they really do. They are in charge of whom goes "in and out" of that boss's space, much like the gatekeeper of old. Gatekeepers can even keep you from getting through to an individual scientist in the lab, not just the director.

Basic courtesy goes a long way here. The first thing we do at my company when we need to get through to some hard-to-reach hiring manager is to ask politely if he or she is available, and explain our mission. Secretaries are used to being treated in a haphazard manner and sometimes even lied to by people who want to get past them and to the boss. If you are friendly, and explain your intent, you stand a much better chance of getting through.

3. If rule #2 doesn't work, call when they aren't around.

Often you just won't be able to get past that gatekeeper. In this case, try calling at lunch, or before/after normal hours. A busy manager is someone who is at her desk far longer than the receptionist is. You will also find that the automated system that many companies use after hours will allow you to dial the manager directly by a lookup of their last name. We use company phone directories all the time to get to hard-to-reach people.

Don't forget that e-mail networking works great too, and that the gatekeepers will often have no problem sharing the e-mail address of their boss with you.



4. Use voicemail to your advantage.

Voicemail is either a plague on mankind or a boon to the job seeker, depending on who you ask. Personally, I hated voicemail until I realized that busy people will only return those calls which sound the most professional--in other words, there is a screening which takes place and it is perfectly possible for you or me to land on top of that list.

When you get voice mail, listen carefully to the message so you can comply with the instructions. It's a good idea to know what you will say before you make your call. Having a script ready will enable you to leave a message that's upbeat, simple, clear and concise. Your message should be 30 seconds or less. It's amazing how an otherwise skilled telephone user comes across as monotone and unsure on a message machine. If you have an answering machine, make sure your message is polite and professional, and be sure you answer your messages.

Leaving a good voicemail message means including your full name, a phone number, a good time to call you back (or a message which states that you will try again), and a short comment about why you are calling, followed by a promise to be brief. It is very important to state why you are calling. For example, "Dr. Smith, the reason that I am calling is that I have a quick question about the area of clinical affairs. I promise to be brief, I know how busy you are."

★ Networking Online

1. One great tool for online networking is www.Linkedin.com. Create a free online profile and link to me if you haven't already done so. In next week's presentation, we'll talk about how to combine this and other internet tools to get to decision-makers.
2. When sending intro emails, be brief and spell check like crazy. Don't go over one screen view. Don't send a resume until you've been asked to. DO include your full name, target job title, phone number, and email at the end of each email. Be very clear about what type of help or information you are seeking. Ask questions and tell them you'll follow up by phone.

NEVER assume your email has been received without confirmation from a real live person (as opposed to an autoresponder)

★ What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a FREE online network of more than 16 million experienced professionals from around the world, representing 130 industries. Or as I like to say, LinkedIn is to professional adults what MySpace is to teenagers. It's like your Rolodex got super smart and friendly. With LinkedIn, you have more than just one level of connection. You now have updated resumes for everyone you know, and everyone they know, and everyone they know. It's more than just a social network. It's a keyword searchable database that can get you to your next gig faster.

When you join, you create a profile that summarizes your professional accomplishments **and** your current business interests. Your profile helps you find and be found by former colleagues, clients and partners. You can add more connections by inviting trusted contacts to join LinkedIn and connect to you. Your network consists of your connections, your connections' connections, and the people they know, linking you to thousands of qualified professionals.



★ Why Use LinkedIn?

Through your network you can:

- **BE FOUND BY RECRUITERS**—They LOVE LinkedIn. This is another reason you need to have an e-mail and phone number. As a recruiter, I often can find the right candidate, but can't instantly access them. Help us out, people!
- **BE FOUND FOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES**—I personally earned about 40 percent of my income one year through a single business relationship that started via LinkedIn.
- **RESEARCH and NETWORK INTO COMPANIES**—Find people within your target industries by name and job title. Review their backgrounds so you know what to say before you call them! I use this feature extensively on behalf of my clients.

★ How to Use LinkedIn

1. **CREATE A FREE ACCOUNT.** In my opinion, most people do not need the features of any of the paid subscriptions.
2. **CREATE / EDIT YOUR PROFILE.** Make your profile as keyword rich and complete as possible. Again, it's a keyword searchable database, so the more right words you have, the more likely you are to be found in search results. Be sure to customize your URL to reflect your name.
TIP: While this is expressly against the user conduct agreement, many LinkedIn subscribers include addresses in the Profile Name section. You can also include your e-mail address and/or phone number under Contact Settings.
3. **UPDATE YOUR PROFILE.** Do this every week or two. Add more keywords or any recent news. On each home page of other LinkedIn users, the fact that you have updated your profile will often be displayed – this puts your name in front of your network again.
4. **LEARN TO USE THE ADVANCED SEARCH FUNCTIONALITY.**
5. **CULTIVATE YOUR NETWORK.** Use the suggestions below.

FIRST – Link to people with large networks. I invite you to link to me at tracy@career-magic.com. That will create an instant network of about a million people.

SECOND - Brainstorm a list of people you know and can likely contact via e-mail.

- Import your e-mail address book from your e-mail client (Outlook, Outlook Express, Yahoo, Gmail). You will get a report indicating who, among these people, are already using LinkedIn and then you can invite them en masse.

THIRD – ALWAYS accept invitations.



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