

NETWORKING TO YOUR NEXT JOB

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As long as humans have worked in groups or organizations, the prevalent way people have found work has been through networking. Despite all of the buzz about the Internet and job-hunting services like Monster and Careerbuilder, the process of winning a job is still the same. People still need to connect with one another on a personal level to find a working relationship that will be both comfortable and effective. The Internet may speed up “introductions,” but the job can only be won after the two parties meet and come to an agreement.

In many companies, staffing requisitions and job postings provide the targets for the talents that are needed within the organization. Unfortunately, these are usually limited to descriptions of the credentials, skills, and experiences the likely candidates might bring to the jobs. In reality, more often than not, it is the style and personality of the candidate that wins the day.

In my many years of recruiting, I have become convinced that a job seeker is at least three times more likely to get interviewed if he or she meets the potential employer before providing a resume. The vast majority of recruiters and hiring managers I have known use the resume to screen people out, not in. However, when you are there, in person, to explain yourself and interact with the employer/recruiter, the issues that may not have been included in their job posting or your resume can be discussed, eliminating many of the reasons for denying you further consideration. On the other hand, if the resume gets there first, you will not have the opportunity to overcome their objections or correct their misinterpretations.

I have often seen this process at work at job fairs. When hiring managers attend job fairs, they get to talk to lots of job seekers, many of whom they would not have selected had they received only their resumes to consider. But very often, the first impression or “chemistry” a job seeker imparts may convince the hiring manager to take a chance on a candidate who might not have the perfect resume.

Networking is as simple as talking to people. Anybody and everybody you know and meet can be a potential networking contact. They may not be a hiring manager or even employed by a company you are interested in, but they may know someone who is. I have known people who connected with employers in the checkout line at the grocery store, at the beauty parlor, during a coffee hour after a church service, at a professional seminar, on the beach, and in bars and restaurants. The idea is to get the people you meet to refer you to others who might be helpful in connecting you with the folks who might have jobs in your career field.

If you don't know how to start a networking conversation, try your own variation of this. “Hi. Lots of people here today, huh? Do you come here often? Where do you work? Oh, really! What do you do? I happen to be looking for a new position in (mention your career field). Do you know anyone I might speak with about this type of work?”

If you can talk about yourself, you can network.