

NETWORKING

Sometimes, it's not what you know but who you know that makes the difference.

REASONS TO NETWORK

Success is not just about *what* you know, it's *who* you know... and how you keep it all organized. Make sure you begin building a Personal Dream Team or your very own Board of Directors, those people will help you get back to work and boost you to the top of the career ladder. From people with a heart of gold to those with a pot of gold, the idea is to create a prize-winning database of individuals who know your name and can give you valuable recommendations. That said, all the networking in the world cannot help you if you aren't comfortable meeting important people and if you cannot find those people's phone numbers and email addresses when you need them. Be sure to keep track of who you meet, how you met them, and how you can reach them in the future!

GETTING STARTED:

- If you feel uncomfortable calling someone out of the blue, find a reason to call. This can be anything from a news article that you want to recommend to congratulations for a personal/professional accomplishment.
- Before meeting a specific contact, do some research on the individual. Research their company and position in it. You can even 'google' their name.
- You know more people than you think. Use these people and *their* contacts for even more possible contacts and job opportunities. Remember, contacts can come from everywhere. Just to name a few: clergy, clubs, professional organization members, volunteer contacts, merchants, civic leaders, neighbors, your classmates, former classmates, school alumni, teachers, professors, coaches, co-workers, former co-workers, bosses, and even friends' bosses.

WHEN YOU MEET PEOPLE...

- It is best to meet in person but it is acceptable to make and important to maintain contact through the phone or email.
- Don't ask the people or places you know if they are hiring but instead tell them your skills and what type of jobs you are looking for.
- Be a great listener to everyone you meet! People love to talk about their experiences and with the right questions you can learn about certain careers and companies or how the individual got their position.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE NETWORKING:

- Why does this type of work interest you, and how did you get started?
 - Why did you choose to join your current company?
 - What do you find most satisfying in your work?
 - What are the major frustrations in your job? What pitfalls should I be sure to avoid?
 - If you had to start over, would you pick this role again? What about this company?
 - What are the top skills someone must possess to be successful in this line of work?
 - What's the best career advice you ever received? What advice would you give to someone starting out in or looking to break into this field?
 - What professional organizations do you consider most beneficial for career development?
 - What is the current hiring outlook for your organization? How does that differ from the hiring outlook in the industry as a whole?
 - Would you be willing to review my résumé and provide feedback?
 - What specific steps should I take to advance my career?
 - When would be a good time to follow up with you to stay in touch?
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FOLLOW-UP

- If you have a formal meeting with someone, make a great impression by sending them a handwritten note immediately following the meeting. Express your pleasure in meeting them and thank them for their time and advice.
- Keep track of the people you meet and your interaction with them!!! Regularly go through your contacts to see if it is time to follow-up or catch up with them. It is important to constantly maintain your contacts; even if you do not need their help today, you may need it down the line.

ONLINE NETWORKING

Thanks to the internet, now you can network from the privacy of your own home. Online meeting places, linking professionals across the country and across the world, are great places to start reconnecting with old networks and forming new contacts. Consider these options:

- **LinkedIn:** With over 35 million professionals, LinkedIn is the largest online professional networking site. Membership is free and allows you to re-connect with old contacts, stay in touch with current ones, 'power your career,' exchange advice with industry experts and more. (www.linkedin.com)
- **Other sites to consider:** Friendster, Plaxo, Facebook, MySpace and more.

HOW TO GET A JOB THROUGH YOUR NETWORK

Why do internal referrals work? Companies want to maintain good relations with current employees. The human resource (HR) department may invite a job candidate recommended by a current employee for an interview simply out of courtesy. This interview is the candidate's chance to impress the company and warrant a second look.

With this in mind, look for a contact inside your ideal company. Ask them to email your resume to the HR department on your behalf, ideally with a strong referral. If a current employee writes to their HR contact saying, "Here's someone my neighbor went to college with. I've talked to her and she sounds very intelligent. I'd like to forward her resume," HR is that much more likely to take a look at it than at an unsolicited resume. Obviously, it helps if the recommendation comes from a senior-level employee, but even an assistant's referral will get attention.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- **Gainesville Area Women's Network (GAWN):** *Local networking organization founded in 1981 focused on supporting women in a diverse mix of careers and personal interests. In addition to meeting GAWN offers Speed Networking events, free quarterly workshops, advertising opportunities and much more.* (www.gawn.org)
- **Women for Hire: Professional Networking:** *Targeted specifically at women, this site provides information on all things related to networking including topics such as 'Networking Made Easy', 'Remembering Names', 'Business Cards', 'Finding a Mentor', and more.* (http://www.womenforhire.com/advice/professional_networking)
- **WebMomz: Powerful Networking Tips for Women Who Don't Like Networking:** *Interesting and relevant article on a site targeted towards working women with children* (<http://www.webmomz.com/Direct-Selling/direct-selling-woman-networking.shtml>)

With more than 80% of available jobs are never advertised, it is essential that you have the ability to access the hidden job market.
