

ACTION GUIDE: Networking Tips and Search Strategies

In reinvention networking (actually, in all networking!) your goal is to build long-term relationships. There are three things that determine successful networking:

- It's best to take a long-term approach—it's not just about who can help you now.
- You drive the action. This means that you take responsibility for making things happen. You make the call, ask for the business card or send the e-mail.
- It's not just about you. All relationships are about mutual assistance, and networking is the same. Ways that you can be helpful to others include sending an article, providing industry information (which you're gathering in your rounds of informational interviews), or even recommending restaurants, books or movies.

How do you build a network?

A common barrier to career reinvention is the lack of a network in your target field, so the question is: Where do you go to build a network?

- **Friends of friends:** This is the most obvious route, but unless you know a ton of people this channel can be exhausted rather easily.
- **Alumni organizations:** Schools are a great resource since they often keep lists of alumni by job industry. Both undergraduate and graduate programs can be helpful—and sometimes even your high school!
- **Industry organizations:** These groups often hold classes, seminars and conferences. Take advantage of the breakout sessions to meet people—it's often easier to make friends in smaller groups.



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- **Volunteering:** Non-profits within your target field are great places to make connections. For maximum impact, look for ones that attract lots of movers and shakers.
- **Clubs:** Groups where people are tied by personal interests—including country clubs and hobby clubs—are great areas to explore. Even though members of hobby clubs are tied by personal interests, remember that they have work lives too—ask them what they do.
- **Media:** This is an unusual strategy but it can be very effective. Contact people when they've been written up or have written a column; they're often more open than you think to being approached.



EXERCISE 1: Building Your Network

Take a moment to brainstorm some ideas for where you can go (or who you can contact) in each of the following areas to begin building your network in your target career:

Friends-of-Friends:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Alumni Organizations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



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Industry Organizations:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Volunteer/Non-Profit:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Clubs:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



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Media Contacts:

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____



The Four Goals Of Networking

Most people think that the goal of networking is to land a job, but in fact there are a series of goals in networking:

1. **Get an in-person meeting:** You'll need to meet people face-to-face.
2. **Get information:** You need to learn about the industry & positions and most importantly what job skills, talents and qualities you'll need to be successful in your target industry.
3. **Get names:** You need to build your network no matter when you land a position, since you'll need this network in order to succeed in your target career.
4. **Land a position:** The end of the job search, but only the beginning of your life in your new career (see #3).

The above list is in order of priority—when it comes to successful networking, getting the in-person meeting comes first and landing the position comes last. The common mistake people often make is thinking that networking is only about landing a job. They tell everyone they contact that they're looking for a job, which then limits the number of in-person meetings they'll get (if the contact doesn't have an open position, they're much less likely to take a meeting). It then becomes a vicious cycle; fewer meetings means less likelihood of getting the information and additional contacts that could eventually lead to a new position.



Ten Tips for Playing The Networking Game

1. **Use both email and calling to try and reach contacts:** People have different preferences. If you happen to know the preference of the person you're trying to contact, use it to your advantage.
2. **Pay attention to timing:** Your target contact is on work time, you're on search time. Give people time to get back to you.
3. **Alternate your method of follow ups:** Call one time; then email a week or so later. This creates the feeling of staying in touch (rather than seeming like pressure!).
4. **Take responsibility for driving the networking process:** Make it easy for your contacts; get their information and follow up them. Don't take the passive route by giving them your card (or calling) and waiting for them to follow up with you.
5. **Always be cheerful and polite:** When leaving messages or speaking with your target (or their assistant!), make sure that you're courteous and pleasant, even if you've contacted them multiple times and they haven't gotten back to you. Keep in mind that no one wants a guilt trip—if you come with attitude, they really won't want to help you!
6. **Don't take it personally:** If people don't get back to you, don't get upset and take their lack of response personally. Nine times out of ten it's not; so the odds are in your favor.
7. **Use the 'Rule of Four':** As general rule, if you don't get a response after about four tries over the course of a few months, move on. (Caveat: let this guideline be driven by how much you want the opportunity to talk to this target, because persistence often pays off. If you really want to speak to a person and they're not responding to calls and emails, then get more creative—send them something, see if they're speaking somewhere and try to meet them, or get a mutual contact to arrange a lunch for the three of you).
8. **Keep your options open:** Even if you really want to reach a particular person or organization, don't get fixated on one path. Often the 'perfect' contact or company turns



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out not to be what we imagined (a myth!), whereas our ideal position or most helpful contact can come from completely unexpected sources.

9. **Identify your networking goal in advance:** Go into to each networking meeting or contact with a goal—don't just show up to talk! Take responsibility for guiding the conversation so that you end up with the results you seek (information, and perhaps additional contacts or learning about any open positions).
10. **'Close' each networking interaction:** Don't leave the networking session without asking for the names, the card, the follow up.

