

Networking Tips

Networking—many people say it is an essential element of any career search. Marshall Loeb of the *Wall Street Journal's* "Marketwatch" writes, "Studies have shown that only 5-10% of all new jobs are posted in the classified ads or on the Internet. The other positions are filled by word of mouth."

Think about a concert, class, or other upcoming event. Most likely you heard about it through word of mouth. Networking is simply utilizing this concept—and common practice—to your advantage.

Points to consider when networking:

- **You do not have to be an extrovert.**

You do not have to be extremely sociable or outgoing to be a good networker. Networking can, and should be, used by everyone. If you are more comfortable in smaller group settings, invite a few friends to dinner, and ask them to bring along new contacts, as well.

- **Use the appropriate body language.**

Nothing is worse than talking to someone who stares at the floor the entire time. Make eye contact, shake hands firmly, and try not to fidget.

- **Interaction can come in all forms.**

Face-to-face networking is ideal. However, email or Web chats also are valuable resources. Make the most out of each interaction by listening and speaking effectively to build rapport with others. If feasible, write down important information as soon as possible after the networking event.

- **Be a giver and a receiver.**

Networking does not stop after the initial meeting. Continue to maintain your networking relationships over time by responding promptly to any requests you receive, periodically "checking in," and sending any information your new contacts may find valuable. Maintaining relationships over the long term is a key element in successful networking and building rapport.

- **Dress appropriately.**

Our appearance is the first impression we make on people. Ensure that you are dressed in the appropriate manner for the networking event. This means that your apparel is suitable and fits well, shirt is tucked in, belt looks new, and hair and nails are well groomed. Don't forget about your shoes! Shoes often are the first item people look at to determine whether or not you pay attention to detail. Leave the worn-down heels and scuffed shoes at home.