

## Networking Advice by ResumeEdge.com

To some people -- the born politicians and the savvy socialites -- networking comes naturally. However, for the rest of us, finding contacts, getting up the courage to call or meet them, and then following through can be daunting. The articles in this section will help you master the fine art of networking to land your desired job.

Eight simple strategies to network your way to a new job.

Informational interviewing is an excellent way to learn more about a career you are considering and an excellent source of networking contacts.

## Eight Networking Tips

While it would make the introverts, the meek, the shy, and the novices awfully happy if the newspaper classifieds contained all job openings, that's simply not the case. In fact, some of the best jobs aren't listed anywhere except in the mental catalogues of CEOs and managers.

So how do you apply for jobs that aren't advertised anywhere, that exist only in the seemingly inaccessible minds of working America's movers and shakers? You meet people who might have insight into your job search. You talk to people who know people who could help you out. You chat it up with strangers at parties. You cold-call people you've read about in the newspaper. You write cordial letters to prominent community leaders. You cultivate an arsenal of contacts. In short, you network.

Think about networking as a game, as a sport, as a personal challenge. Below are some strategies for success.

1. Brainstorm for Contacts
2. Where the Contacts Are – Tried and True Places to Network
3. Be Prepared
4. Networking Knows No Boundaries
5. Follow Up
6. What Goes Around Comes Around
7. Make It Easy For Your Contacts
8. Stay Organized

### 1. Brainstorm for Contacts

Think of everyone who could possibly serve as a contact. Don't limit yourself to people who could clearly help you out - friendly, accessible people in unrelated fields often have contacts they would be happy to share with you. Also, people who, through either work or volunteer activities, have contact with a diverse crowd can be extremely helpful. To get you started with your list, here are some suggestions:

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helpful. To get you started with your list, here are some suggestions:

- Family friends
- Local politicians
- Relatives
- Journalists
- Neighbors
- Business executives
- Professors
- Non-profit directors
- Alumni
- Your physician
- Former employees
- Your hair dresser
- Former co-workers
- Prominent community members
- Public relations officials
- Members of professional organizations
- Religious leaders

### 2. Where the Contacts Are - Tried and True Places to Network

- Local alumni association
- Conventions
- Class reunions
- Club meetings
- Cocktail parties
- Internet list-servs
- Fundraisers
- Volunteer opportunities
- Business conferences
- Continuing education classes

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### 3. Be Prepared

Networking is a little like planning a political campaign. While it's essential that you are honest and relaxed, you should not wing it. Just as politicians think about what they tactically need to accomplish, convey, and gain when they make an appearance or give a speech, you should approach networking opportunities with a game plan. Before you confidently and charmingly sashay into a business conference room, a dinner party, or group event, do your homework. Find out who will be there, or do your best to list who you think will probably be present. Then decide who you would most like to meet. When you have your list of potential contacts, thoroughly research their work and their backgrounds and then make up some questions and conversational statements that reflect your research. And finally, think critically about what your goals are for your networking function. What information do you want to walk away with? What do you want to convey to the people you meet? But, as is always true, it's important to be flexible and to perceive opportunities you didn't plan to confront.

### 4. Networking Knows No Boundaries

Business conferences, informational interviews, college reunions, and cocktail parties are obvious networking opportunities - you expect to walk away with a few business cards and some recommendations for potential rolodex entries. But the reality is that invaluable contacts and enviable opportunities often surprise us. Good networkers are flexible people who approach connection-making as a fluid enterprise that extends far beyond hotel conference room walls. You never know who will step onto the adjacent elliptical trainer at the gym; who will be parked behind you in an interminable grocery store line; who will sit next to you on an airplane; or who will be under the hair dryer next to you at the beauty salon. Don't let these opportunities pass you by. While it may have been sheer luck that you bumped into an affable CEO, your savvy approach to networking can turn a banal exchange into a pivotal moment in your career path. Always be ready to make a contact and exchange business cards. And remember, don't hesitate to network someone who has no obvious connection to your ambitions:

Your new contact may be able to give you relevant names of his or her friends and colleagues.

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### 5. Follow Up

After you meet with a contact, it is absolutely essential to write a thank you note. Tell your contact how much he or she helped you, and refer to particularly helpful, specific advice. Everyone – even the most high-level executive - likes to feel appreciated. In addition to immediate follow-up after a meeting or conversation, keep in touch with your contacts. This way, they may think of you if an opportunity comes up, and they will also be forthcoming with new advice. It's important to stay on their radar screens without being imposing or invasive. And, of course, if you get that new job, be sure to tell them and thank them again for their help.

### 6. What Goes Around Comes Around

If you want to be treated with respect, treat others with respect. If you want your phone calls and email missives returned, call and write back to the people who contact you. If you want big-wigs to make time for you, make yourself available to others whom you might be able to help out. It's that simple

The higher up you climb in the professional world, the more you'll find that everyone knows everyone else. Thus, if you're impolite, curt, condescending, or disposed to burning bridges, you'll cultivate a reputation that will serve as a constant obstacle. Remember - the people who seem little now will one day be running companies and making decisions. If you treated them with kindness and respect when they were green, they'll remember and return the favor later.

### 7. Make It Easy For Your Contacts

When you call, meet with, or write to a potential contact, make it as easy as possible for them to help you. Explain what you specifically want, and ask detail-oriented questions.

For example, "I'm looking for jobs in arts administration. Do you know anyone who works at the Arts Council? May I have their names and phone numbers? May I use your name when I introduce myself to them?" Another entrée into a productive conversation is to solicit career tips and advice from your contact. Most people love to talk about themselves. By asking for your contact to offer valuable insight from his or her personal experiences and successes, he or she will feel important and respected. Who doesn't like to feel like an expert?

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### 7. Make It Easy For Your Contacts

Be sure to avoid making general demands, such as, "Do you know of any jobs that would be good for me?" This sort of question is overwhelming and it puts an undue burden on your contact.

### 8. Stay Organized

Keep a record of your networking. Whether you do this in a Rolodex, in a notebook, or in a database file on your computer, it's important to keep track of your contacts. Make sure your system has plenty of room for contacts' names, addresses, phone numbers, companies, job titles, how you met them, and subsequent conversations you've had with them.

## Informational Interviews *by ResumeEdge.com*

What's an informational interview?

Why do I want to conduct informational interviews?

Whom should I interview?

How should I set up a meeting?

How do I prepare for an informational interview?

How do I conduct the informational interview?

How do I follow up after the informational interview?

### ***What's an informational interview?***

In general, an informational interview is a meeting or conversation between two people:

someone who wants to learn more about a particular career and someone who works in that career field. For example, if you are a recent college graduate interested in becoming a dentist, you would pursue informational interviews with experienced dentists. Or, if you wanted to go into investment banking, you might arrange meetings with executives at Goldman Sachs or Morgan Stanley. Keep in mind that an informational interview is NOT a job interview.

### ***Why do I want to conduct informational interviews?***

Informational interviewing is an excellent way to learn more about a career you are considering. Let's say, for example, that after extensive research you're pretty sure you want to be a management consultant. Informational interviews with seasoned consultants - employees at firms as well as self-employed consultants - will help you solidify your goals.

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### ***Why do I want to conduct informational interviews?***

If all goes well, your informational interviews should leave you much more knowledgeable about a particular career or field:

You should have a sense of what - should you go down the career paths of your interviewees - you would do on a daily basis.

You should be able to pinpoint prospective employers. Through your interview you'll develop an understanding what it's like to work for specific companies, firms, or individuals, and you'll be able to make informed decisions about what employer would be a good match for you.

You will expand your list of contacts by collecting names from interviewees.

Just by listening to your interviewees speak, you'll begin to develop a fluency in the vocabulary and verbal etiquette of your prospective field.

You will cull information from your interviewees that, during your own job interviews, will help you show prospective employers that you've done your homework.

You'll practice handling yourself well in a professional context and discussing your own objectives.

### ***Whom should I interview?***

As you might guess, you should interview people whose perspectives will help you make decisions about what you want to do with your life. There are two ways to go about finding interviewees:

**The Connections Approach:** Use your network of contacts to find interviewees. Your network - which includes friends, family, co-workers, college alumni, professors, and anyone else you know - might include potential interviewees. But what is most likely is that the people in your network either know a potential interviewee or know someone who knows a potential interviewee. And, of course, you can always ask for names from an interviewee.

**The Cold Call Approach:** This tactic skips the middleman entirely. You simply choose a relevant company and contact the person who's in the position that interests you. You can usually find names pretty easily on company websites and in company literature. However, if that doesn't work, call the main switchboard of the organization and ask, for example, for the name and phone number or email address of the head of advertising.

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### ***How should I set up a meeting?***

The three main ways of making contact are telephone, email, and snail mail. If you call your potential interviewee, it might help to write down what you plan to say ahead of time. If you send something written, be sure to proofread your missive. It is especially important that you do not say or do anything that makes it sound as though you're trying to get the person to hire you. While that would be nice, it's not the point of the informational interview. Telephone calls, emails, and letters basically follow the same structure:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Explain that you're interested in the field in question, but that you would like to learn more about it through someone like your potential interviewee, who has a lot of experience and wisdom.
3. Give a specific reason you're interested in talking to the potential interviewee - you'll show you're serious and focused when you, for example, tell the head of a public relations firm that you know her organization does a lot of work for environmental groups, and you're specifically interested in that aspect of PR.

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### ***How should I set up a meeting?***

4. Ask if the person has time for a 30-minute meeting during which you could learn more about the interviewees' work and thoughts about their career.

This whole process of contacting interviewees might make you a little nervous - if you're new to the working world and low on the totem pole, calling up a business executive can be a little frightening. You may be especially hesitant because you feel like you have nothing to offer in return for that executive's time. Relax. Most successful members of the working world have an intimate understanding of the networking system. They know that when they were inexperienced, seasoned professionals helped them out. And now that they're the high-level executives, they'll talk to you at a business conference or grant you a 30-minute meeting – with the understanding that when you're a big shot, you'll take a few minutes out of a busy day to advise a newcomer about your line of work. And, if that answer doesn't satisfy you, remember that most people love talking about themselves and relish the experience of feeling like an important expert in their field.

### ***How do I prepare for an informational interview?***

It's impossible to overvalue the importance of preparing for your informational interview. The more research you've done about the interviewee's background, accomplishments, line of work, company, and current projects, the better the conversation will be. And, if you impress the interviewee with your preparation, he or she will be much more inclined to help you and take you seriously.

Spend some time looking at the interviewee's company's Website. Read articles about current issues in the interviewee's line of work, about the company itself, and about the interviewee. Then, make a list of questions. It maybe helpful to put your questions in order of priority so that if you run out of time, you will have addressed the most important issues. Your questions might address lifestyle, education, daily tasks, the future of the interviewee's industry, office culture, and what the interviewee might do differently if he or she could do something over again. Just remember it's inappropriate to ask personal questions - you should be having a professional exchange.



**Networking Advice** by *ResumeEdge.com****How do I conduct the informational interview?***

You've made a contact with someone and they've agreed to meet with you in person. Though you shouldn't grovel at the sight of your networking contact, be considerate and appreciative of his or her time. Your face-to-face meeting should last no longer than you promised it would (20 or 30 minutes), and your conversation should follow a specific sequence. Begin by introducing yourself and stating the reason for the meeting. This should lead directly into an explanation of how your new contact might be able to help you out. Next, briefly explain your background so that you contact can put your questions and requests in an appropriate context. The next step is to ask your specific, prepared questions. However, your prepared inquiries shouldn't keep you from asking relevant questions that you think of during the meeting. Part of having a good exchange is reacting to and listening to your contact, and this means, in some cases, that your conversation will go down a different path than the one you originally intended. Then, at the end of the meeting, ask for two or three names of others who might be helpful to you. Be sure to ask your contact if you can use his or her name when you contact the referrals. End the meeting with the door open for future contact.

***How do I follow up after the informational interview?***

Always send a thank you note to the interviewee. Mention specific aspects of the conversation that you found helpful, and acknowledge the interviewee's generosity in speaking with you. Make a point to keep in touch with the interviewee after your conversation with him or her. For example, if you get a job, let him or her know of your progress.