

Network Your Way to a New Job

The people you know are your best source for locating new employment. Numerous studies prove that the “tried and true” path of networking is still the most successful way to secure work.

Research consistently identifies networking as an important job search tool — anywhere from 40% to 80% of job placements are attributed to networking, and according to a survey by Right Management, person-to-person networking is the single most effective way to find a new job, with 46% of job seekers identifying networking as the reason they found their most recent job.

The single biggest mistake most job searchers make is not asking for help from their network. People want to help you — so let them! But don't wait until you're out of work to start developing relationships with your network. As author Harvey Mackey says, “Dig your well before you're thirsty.” Develop your contacts, be willing to help folks with their requirements... and increase the chances that they will be there when you need them!

The more people who know you are looking for a job — the more eyes and ears are available to help. Networking is about getting the people you already know to help connect you to the people who will help you land your next career opportunity.

The first step is to identify who is in your network. This can include: friends, relatives, parents of children's friends, parents and relatives of your friends, club members, cousins, neighbours, current and previous co-workers and managers, suppliers, professional association contacts, and your community contacts.

If you don't already have a list, start one! Make a list of all of your contacts — past employers, vendors, customers, colleagues, competitors, bankers, and others. You never know who may have a great lead or know of an unadvertised opportunity.

Finally, here are some additional pointers on how to develop your network:

- Attend networking events (for example, those hosted by your professional organization or Chamber of Commerce). Participate in association meetings and take advantage of educational opportunities.



- Work as a volunteer. Consider opportunities within your industry or local community associations. Connect with non-profit groups to offer support and expertise. Volunteering is one of the best ways to network your way to new contacts.
- Participate in an online community. This can be a social networking site like Facebook or LinkedIn, or your professional association's website (which might have an e-list or message board to connect members).
- Contact your alumni groups. Your college or university should have an alumni association (often with a directory of members) that can be useful. You can mine the directory for contacts in your field, even if they didn't graduate in the same year as you.

Adrienne Tom is an international award-winning resume writer and job search strategist who partners with executives, directors, and managers on the development of leading career tools.