



*Career Transition Series*

## **A Brief Guide to Job Search Networking**



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*Finding Exceptional Talent.  
Building Exceptional Organizations.*

## Contributors

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Anita Shuper is a writer, researcher, and business consultant. With a background in the arts, science, and business, including an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, she has written on topics ranging from language to lasers to local entrepreneurship. Anita regularly contributes her communications expertise to projects and programs in not-for-profit and startup organizations. Her current focus is developing career management resources for students and executives.

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## **Point of View**

Networking is a “contact” sport, not a spectator one. You have to be proactive to achieve your networking objectives. If you’re looking for a job, networking is critical. Not doing it is a miss.

An obvious benefit of networking is access to the “hidden job market.” A high percentage of hires are made through word-of-mouth networking. Since these opportunities aren’t advertised, there’s less candidate competition – and more chance that you’ll land the job you want.

In addition to getting job leads, networking will also provide you with the expertise, knowledge, and support of your contacts, all of which are valuable. Despite these benefits, many still don’t engage in networking. And those who do network aren’t always effective. Why is this?

First, there’s an element of denial that prevents people from taking full advantage of networking opportunities. They don’t realize or acknowledge how much it can move their job search forward. Second, networking can provoke anxiety even in the most accomplished professionals. They might not know exactly how to network – what to do and what to say.

Sure, networking can be daunting. Approaching people you don’t know and convincing them to pay attention can be challenging. But it’s not impossible. And with online services such as LinkedIn, it’s easier than ever to network. People are there to connect with other people. Understanding this can reduce the fear and anxiety that prevent people from reaching out.

The first thing to do is start with the right attitude. Accept that networking is an integral part of your job search strategy. Then, create a plan. Think about what you want to accomplish, set some goals, and work towards achieving them daily.

Don’t let denial, procrastination, or fear hold you back. If you show a genuine interest and develop yourself as a worthwhile resource, people will want to connect with you. Networking doesn’t yield immediate results, so be patient and persistent. Your commitment will pay off.

Bill Holland

## W5H

### Why?

Your main objective is finding your desired job; networking will get you closer to that goal. In addition to opening the door to the hidden job market, networking is an excellent research and personal branding tool. It allows you to share knowledge with others, learn from them, and demonstrate your expertise.

### What?

The top three things you need to do are (1) have the right attitude, (2) make a plan and (3) take action. A good attitude will put you in the right frame of mind, a plan will keep you on track, and executing that plan is the key to success.

### Who?

Identify individuals who can influence your career and target them when building your network. Focus on people in your industry of interest who can provide you with information, leads, and other connections to help you with your job search.

### When?

Develop the discipline to work on your network every day. Even small steps make a difference over time. You never know which call, which email, or which event might be the one that connects you with your next job opportunity. Furthermore, continue to network even when you're employed. That way, you'll have a ready-made, robust network even before you need it.

### Where?

There are no limits to where you can network. Start with your family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and associations. Connect with them by phone, email, and at events. Whenever possible, schedule one-to-one meetings in person. And, of course, network online using LinkedIn to connect with a large number of relevant contacts all over the world.

### How?

It's all about execution. With a plan in place, the "how" is a commitment to doing it. In this guide, we've set out the following goals for you to start working on: (1) building your base network, (2) knowing what to say and how to say it, (3) getting LinkedIn, and (4) having face-to-face meetings. If you focus on these at a very minimum, you will be off to a good start. It's up to you to supplement the activities we suggest with others that make sense for you. There's no shortage of resources in bookstores and online to keep moving you forward.

### Attitude

Networking is about what's possible. Having the right attitude and an open mind will get you closer to your ultimate goal of finding a job. Networking is extremely effective in job search, yet anxiety and fear prevent people from engaging in it. Putting yourself out there is not easy. However, networking can be learned, and stress can be reduced with practice.

A positive attitude toward networking is an excellent place to start. Challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone. Only some people will be receptive to your calls and networking requests. Focus on those who are, and don't let others discourage you.

Maintain a good attitude in your approach, as well. Whether you're leaving a voice mail, having a face-to-face conversation, or sending an email, be aware of what you say and how you say it. This will influence how people respond to you and your requests. And don't be ashamed to ask for help. With the right approach, you'll find that many people will respond favourably.

### Plan: Creating SMART Goals

With the right attitude, the next step is to make a plan. Having a roadmap to keep you focused and on track is essential. Without a plan, you'll engage in aimless activities and wonder why you're not reaching your ultimate goal of finding a job.

A complicated plan will just prevent you from getting things done, so keep it simple. Overplanning invariably leads to underdoing. However, to be efficient and effective, you must spend some time upfront identifying your goals and creating a workable action plan.

A good way to approach your goals is to make them SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-driven). On the next pages, we review several goals and provide some advice to help you:

1. Build your base network
2. Know what to say and how to say it
3. Get LinkedIn
4. Have face-to-face meetings

### **Execution: 1. Build your base network**

You may not be actively networking, but you do have a network. Consider all the people you know in various groups: Family & Friends, Classmates & Colleagues (current and past), Associations & Boards. Since you already know them, you'll be "warm connecting." The "cold connecting" happens with people you don't know but want to know. Identify a number of these individuals and reach out to them as well. You are building your base network by connecting with all these people. Each of them, in turn, can potentially connect you with several others.

You ultimately want high-value contacts, but when you're getting started, and if you're nervous about networking, put the "easy" ones first on your list. Networking with people you know will respond positively will help build your network and confidence. You can "practice" networking with known contacts. You can determine what works and doesn't and develop your approach and scripts. Work on connecting with your base network for a week, then understand the time and effort needed. Set yourself up and do a dry run. Then, recalibrate.

### **Execution: 2. Know what to say and how to say it**

When it comes to knowing what to say, less is more, more is less, and preparation is critical. People tend to have short attention spans, so it is essential to capture their attention early with clear, concise, and compelling messages. This is true whether you communicate via email, telephone, or in person. The more prepared you are, the more relaxed you'll be and the better of an impression you'll make as a confident, competent individual.

There are a variety of ways in which you'll be interacting with people – electronically, by telephone, and in person. If you think about the possible situation in which you'll find yourself networking, you can prepare scripts for each. Remember that it's not about sticking to your script verbatim. You don't want to sound rehearsed if you speak to someone on the phone or at an event. However, writing out what you want to say and practicing it will help ground your message and make your delivery more natural. What you say has to be informative, and how you say it has to be engaging. You want to give people a reason to pay attention to you.

### Execution: 3. Get LinkedIn

For job seekers, being on LinkedIn is imperative. Employers search for talent on LinkedIn; they won't find you if you're not there. These days, being on LinkedIn is like having a resume – it's just expected. For LinkedIn to be effective, you must network and market yourself actively. It's not enough to just have a passive presence.

LinkedIn is a tremendous resource for job search. As a professional networking site, networking behaviour is expected and encouraged there. Of course, proper etiquette is still essential, but don't feel shy about reaching out to people. That's the raison d'être of LinkedIn, and if you find people who are not responsive or respond poorly, simply move on. Most people will respond positively. The key to LinkedIn is simple: learn how it works, set up your profile, and start using it.

### Execution: 4. Have face-to-face meetings

Face-to-face networking meetings come in many forms. From the proverbial “elevator pitch” to networking events and informational interviews, you will find yourself face-to-face with people who can help you in your job search. In this section, we focus on scheduled networking meetings. From requesting to preparing for your meeting and ultimately having it, there are several things to remember.

**Making the request:** Be professional when you request an in-person meeting. While people are generally open to meeting, understand that they are busy and under no obligation to meet with you.

**Preparation:** Take the time in advance to learn about the person with whom you're meeting, their role, and their organization. Be prepared to articulate what you're looking for and list topics you'd like to discuss.

**The meeting:** Look and act the part! Be on time and dress appropriately. Make it your objective to create discussion and learn about your industry of interest and what's happening in the marketplace. The best conversation you can have with people is to get them to talk about themselves or their business. Ask if you can do anything for them, and don't leave without indicating your follow-up action.

**Following up:** Send an email thanking the other person for taking the time to meet with you and indicate that you'd like to stay connected.

## Top 10 Mistakes

- 1. You are not doing it.** It's a severe miss if you don't network in your job search. If you want access to the hidden job market, you must make a concerted effort to put yourself out there, get to know people, and get them to know you.
- 2. You are using only known contacts.** Starting with people you know is excellent if you're new to networking. However, make it a point to broaden your contacts to access new people and opportunities.
- 3. You don't have a plan.** Set out some networking objectives and work towards achieving them. With a plan and a clear idea of what you want to achieve, your networking efforts will be focused and effective.
- 4. Being selfish.** Networking is about giving and taking. Taking a "what's in it for me" approach will make you unpopular. Reciprocating will help build network relationships, so offer to help people whenever you can.
- 5. You are not following up.** If a network contact provides you with leads, follow up with them promptly. If you offer information to someone, make sure you keep your word. Make following up a habit.
- 6. You don't have a personal pitch.** Networking is about marketing yourself. You must be prepared to tell your story, including what you're looking for and can offer.
- 7. Being demanding.** Avoid irritating your network contacts. They have their priorities, so don't monopolize their time or generosity. Keep your communications regular but not overwhelming.
- 8. You are not targeting specific people.** An essential part of networking includes cold calling. Identify organizations and people who work in your area of interest, then pick up the phone and call them directly.
- 9. You are not using technology.** The internet is a great way to identify people of interest and connect with them. Research online professional networks, learn how they work, and sign up as a user.
- 10. You are not showing gratitude.** Be sure to thank your network contacts for their help. If they've been instrumental in helping you land a new job, tell them the good news and continue to stay in contact.



## **Titles in the Career Transition Series**

### **A Brief Guide to Executive Branding**

As an executive, it's essential to establish and develop your brand. Nobody else will do it for you! In this guide, we'll introduce you to the "5 Cs" of executive branding: clarity, consistency, constancy, credibility, and confidence.

### **A Brief Guide to Job Search Networking**

Networking is an integral part of your job search strategy. It's also easier than most people think! In this guide, we'll get you started on some essential networking activities, including building your base network, preparing your pitches, getting set up on LinkedIn, and having face-to-face meetings.

### **A Brief Guide to Writing Your Resume**

Resumes open doors. They can also close them. To be considered for the opportunities you want, it's up to you to make a great first impression with your resume. In this guide, we'll get you started on writing your chronological resume, online resume, and one-page biography.

### **A Brief Guide to Interviewing**

While resumes open doors, interviews get offers. You must demonstrate that your skills, attitude, and personality make you the right person for the job. In this guide, we'll get you started on preparing for a winning interview.

### **A Brief Guide to Job Offer Negotiation**

Negotiating is both an art and a science. People who are uncomfortable about negotiating need more confidence because they need experience. In this guide, we'll start you on how to best prepare and practice for a win-win job offer negotiation.

### **A Brief Guide to Executive Onboarding**

Getting the job is excellent, but succeeding in it is what matters. Whether or not your new organization has a formal onboarding program, consider yourself in charge of the process. In this guide, we'll get you started on several critical onboarding activities to set you up for success.

Start Mandrake's FREE! Career Transition Program by [clicking here](#).