

The Riley Guide: Network, Interview, & Negotiate or How to Job Search

Networking to Enhance Your Job Search

January 2011

Revised January 2011

What is a Network?

I bet you have a network you don't even recognize.

According to Merriam-Webster, one of the definitions of network is "a usually informally interconnected group or association of persons". These associations can be personal relationships with friends, family, and others you meet in an informal gathering. They can also be business relationships you develop with vendors, customers, supervisors, subordinates, and even competitors you encounter during the course of your career.

In her article, *Everyday People Key in Job Networking* (Denver Post, March 30, 2003), Kelly Pate wrote that "Friends, friends of friends, a barber, a neighbor and former co-workers are often the best resources for job seekers, especially in a market with far more people out of work than job openings, job placement experts say." Your network is only limited by the company you keep, both on and off the job. Just don't think the only time you are networking is during a job search.

You are networking when you...

- attend professional meetings, conferences, or conventions
- visit with other parents during your child's sporting or music events
- volunteer for "clean-up" day at the park
- visit with other members of your social clubs or religious groups
- talk with your neighbors
- strike up a conversation with someone else waiting at the veterinarian's office
- search out friends (current as well as former) on Facebook
- re-connect with former colleagues on LinkedIn
- talk to sales persons visiting your office

In Terms of a Job Search, Networking is the way to Go!

Networking is consistently cited as the Number 1 way to get a new job. You know how everyone says that "80% of the jobs available never get advertised? This is how you find them and get them!

According to CareerXRoad's 9th Annual Sources of Hire Study (Feb 2010, PDF) "referrals make up 26.7% of all external hires (new employees hired from outside the organization). [...] The yield for referrals is one hire for every 15 referrals, making this category the most efficient source by far." (Since I know you will ask, "Hires attributed to Job Boards represent 13.2% of external hires.")

Those who make the actual hiring decisions would much rather talk to someone who has been recommended by someone they already employ. This is your first reference check, which saves the hiring

Advantages of Online Networking

- There are thousands of discussion groups and community forums covering hundreds of subjects.
- You can "break the ice" before meeting someone in person.
- You can listen, engage, or be engaged as you wish. No one can see you sweat, and you don't have to feel like a wallflower since no one can see you standing off by yourself.
- Many recruiters are lurking the lists to find potential candidates.

Disadvantages

- Networking online is just as difficult as networking in person! It may actually be even more difficult because you can't establish a true connection online.
- First impressions count even more. Be very careful with your first public posting.
- Your online behavior matters more than you think. Don't be a jerk! I really mean it!

You may chuckle at that last one, but a friend of mine who participated in a mailing list for professional engineers told me that one participant on the list was so nasty online that no one would attend his presentations at conferences nor refer business opportunities to him. *Talk about having your online persona affect your offline reputation.*

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Netiquette: The Fine Art of Correct Behavior on the Internet

The basic rule:

Do not go boldly where you have never gone before!

1. **Stop** and learn the rules of behaviour in effect in this particular group and follow them!
2. **Look** for a list of Frequently Asked Questions (*the FAQ*) so you don't ask the same questions that everyone else has many times before.
3. **Listen** patiently to the discussion groups you have joined and learn the tone, language, and culture of the group.
4. **Never** post your resume to the list nor openly tell the entire list you are job searching and ask if anyone can help you unless the group is specifically set up for this kind of service.

We have several articles discussing Netiquette on our page of **Networking Tips** along with some alarming information on The Internet As A Job Reference. **They are required reading before you start strutting your stuff online.**

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Where to Network Online

- In [mailing lists](#) and [discussion boards](#), look for postings by someone who seems to be knowledgeable about the topic being discussed. Note his or her email address at the top, and look for signature information citing their organizational affiliation, position in the organization, and more complete contact information.
- In a [social networking site](#), limit yourself to contact with whom you can claim a valid (if limited) connection -- you are both former employees of X, you are both graduates of X, you are both members of X association, mailing list, or discussion group. If you cannot make any of these claims but you know someone in their network who is also in your network, ask that person to introduce you.

Once you have identified some persons you want to contact, prepare your initial contact carefully. Be professional and especially polite, and double-check for grammar and spelling errors before sending your message.

1. **Be sure to contact the person directly and not through the list.**
2. **Be concise.** Identify yourself, state why you are contacting this person, and list some of your interests and where you noticed some correlation with his or her interests as noted in the postings you've read.
3. **Do NOT send this person a copy of your resume.** You are networking, trying to establish a relationship that extends far beyond just "please help me find a job." A resume will blow everything to bits at this point. Just relax and let the relationship build to a point where a resume will be requested or you feel comfortable asking for advice on preparation.
4. **Request a follow-up to this email, via phone or email.** Give your contact the choice of how to continue.

If you are trying to make a connection through a site such as Facebook or LinkedIn, I suggest you add a personal message to your request. Again, keep it concise but also cite your connection, such as "I recognize you from last year's alumni gathering at X university. May I add you to my professional network?" This type of introduction and request will garner many more positive responses than the standard "may I add you to my professional network" generated by these services.

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Need More Info or Assistance?

We also have information on [Networking and Support Groups](#), [How to Network Online \(and Why\)](#), and [Networking and Support Groups](#). The resources on our page for [Job Search Guidance](#) may also have helpful ideas for you.

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More job search activities: [Find Job Leads](#) || [Target through Research](#) || [Prepare & Post Your Resume](#)

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