



5. Tapping Your Network

You've heard the saying "It's not what you know. It's who you know." Well, it turns out that both are important. You don't need an "in" to get a job. However, *who* you know sure can help! Surveys show that more job seekers find new jobs through networking.

Companies often use networking to hire because it takes some of the risk out of the hiring process. Hiring someone they know, or that someone they trust vouches for, ups the odds that the company will find a good fit - someone with proven skills and experience and a personality that will gel with the team. Many of these job openings will never even be officially announced, because someone will refer the hiring manager to a good candidate first.

How can you tap this hidden job market? Network, of course!

Networking might sound intimidating or even cliché, but it's something we do every day. If your car breaks down and you need a good mechanic, you might ask your neighbor for a recommendation or post the question to your friends on Facebook. We rely on people we know for information and support. And, it's a two-way street, isn't it? We benefit, but we also help our circle of friends and acquaintances. If you learn a neighbor had surgery, you might bring a meal. If your friend's daughter starts babysitting, you might offer to hire her. We all have networks – people we interact with for mutual benefit.

Informal Networking

As you consider a job search, think about the network you already have: friends, neighbors, colleagues, people in your bowling league, dance class, church, gym, or kids' school, people you went to school with or meet up with every week at the dog park. You probably already use an online social networking site such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or Tumblr to stay connected to friends and family near and far.

Let people know you're looking for work, and ask for job leads and advice about the industry. Post on Facebook, send e-mails, call or text, and mention it casually to your workout buddy. People can't help you if they don't know you're looking. You may be surprised at who offers to help, or who they can introduce you to. Ask for referrals and introductions. Remember, your friends know friends. So tapping your friends' networks grows your network exponentially.

Consider this example:

Let's use a multiplication rate of five. In this example you know five people within your network that could help you with your job search. Each of them know five additional people who could help, and each of them know five...etc. At that rate, there would be only four degrees of separation between you and 625 people who could potentially help you find the job of your dreams. Now that's the power of networking!



Here are some tips to make your outreach successful:

- **Be specific** about the position you are looking for or field you want to get into. The better the information, the more people can help.
- Have your “[elevator pitch](#)” ready. (Refer to Appendix II). What is that? It’s a short (less than 1-minute), plain-English summary of your background, qualifications, what you’re looking for, and how you can add value as an employee.
- Make sure that any [networking letters](#) you write are **brief, with perfect spelling, grammar, and punctuation**.
- Remember: **networking is a two-way street**. Don’t bring every conversation back to your job search. No one wants to feel like they’re being used. Someone will recommend you if they know and trust you. Listen, help them solve problems when you can, and enjoy each other’s company.
- If you don’t know where to begin, **set a quota of calls or e-mails to make each week**. Tell yourself you will take one person out for coffee each week for an informational interview (to learn more about their job or company or how they found work). It will get easier. If you get discouraged, remember: it only takes one break to land that dream job.
- Say **thank you** when anyone helps you. Send a thank you note. Treat a mentor to lunch or coffee. If a friend introduces you to someone, let him know how the meeting went. You want people who help to feel good about it, so they’re willing to do it again and the relationship stays strong.
- **Take advantage of every introduction**. Even if it doesn’t lead to a job, you might have an opportunity to learn more about a company, or skills needed in the field, or future growth prospects in the industry. And you’ve grown your network!⁶

Volunteering

As you look for your next job, doing some volunteer work can add value in several ways. Volunteering is a good way to give back to the community, stay connected, network, and show a prospective employer that you know how to use your free time well. If opportunities exist to volunteer in the field you hope to work in, that is ideal! Otherwise, sign up to help organizations and causes you are passionate about, or learn new skills that might help you on your next job. Whichever path you take, you will gain confidence and pride, have new topics to discuss when you network, and maybe even add a few more positive references to your list.



Formal Networking Events

You can also grow your network by attending formal networking events like a local business association meeting. For many of us, walking into a room full of strangers sounds as pleasant as a root canal. Take comfort in knowing that many people there have the same goals or interests as you and will be happy to meet you.

Where can you find networking events? Simple Google searches will bring up many avenues to explore.

- Join or visit **professional associations** like the local Chamber of Commerce or industry-specific clubs. (There is a surprisingly wide range of these clubs; a search might pull up a local Telecommunications Industry Association, a Women’s Army Veterans Association, a Distribution Contractors Association, and even a National Write Your Congressman Club.)
- Take advantage of **conferences, symposia, seminars, and workshops** offered by your local American Job Center, professional associations, local colleges, or training providers.
- Join a **community job club** (often hosted by American Job Centers, churches, and libraries) for regular networking and learning events.
- Join a **special interest group** of like-minded aficionados. These too are varied, and might range from a hiking group, to tiny house enthusiasts, to veterans in business, to a ukulele club.
- Tap your **alumni network**. Does your alma mater have a local alumni chapter that hosts talks by visiting professors or meets in a sports bar to watch games? Does the college placement office sponsor career fairs open to students and alumni (or provide other supports, like resume and job search assistance or a job club)? Do you have a high school or college reunion coming up? Attend, or better yet, volunteer for the planning committee, where you’ll really get to know people by working alongside them.

Go to as many networking events as you can, because the more people you meet, the bigger your network, and the more chances of connecting with someone who can help you get a job.

Once you identify networking opportunities, what can you do to make them successful? Three steps are all you need for success: be prepared, make the most of the event, and follow up. Let’s talk about each in more detail.

1. Be Prepared

- **Know your elevator pitch.** Practice it so that it doesn’t sound rehearsed. You want to work it into conversations “naturally.”
- Bring lots of professional **business cards** and a pen. In some industries, people can get creative with business cards or promotional materials. If that might work for you, check out any of the free business card templates on line.
- If it’s a job fair, bring plenty of **professional resumes**.



- **Dress professionally and be well-groomed.** The biggest influence on a first impression comes from what you're wearing when you walk in. More creative fields may expect you to express your creative personality. And of course, if it's a meet up of the Ukulele Club, dress will likely be casual, but you should still look put together (and don't forget your ukulele). Most importantly, make sure what you wear makes you feel good so you exude confidence.
- **Do some homework** so you can be a good conversationalist.
 - Have some ice breaker questions in mind. They can be as simple as, "Is this your first time at a meeting like this?" or "Have you been part of this group for long?" or even "Everything looks good. What are you going to try?" while standing in line for appetizers. For more ideas, check out some of the many online articles.
 - Brush up on general news as well as trends in the industry.
 - If you are targeting a specific company, review their hiring needs, strategic goals, and any big news related to them. If you can identify the hiring manager, do a Google search or look at her LinkedIn profile to see what you might have in common. Did you go to school in the same town? Volunteer for the same organization? Is there something interesting in her background that could spark a genuine conversation? Remember it's about a connection: making a lasting, positive impression.

2. Make the Most of the Event

- **Be aware of body language.** The second most important element in a first impression comes from the way you hold yourself. Stand tall with your shoulders back (that shows confidence). Look people in the eye (which shows them you're paying attention) and smile (that demonstrates a positive, open personality). Give a firm, brief handshake, and avoid crossing your arms or fidgeting (which conveys discomfort or defensiveness).
- **Go up to someone with a smile and handshake**, and introduce yourself. If you see a group talking, it's okay to walk up and say "Mind if I join you?" then chime in when appropriate.
- **Ask to be introduced**, if you want to meet someone and have a mutual acquaintance.
- **Be a giver not just a taker.** Listen and offer assistance where you can. Remember – if you hijack a group conversation and make it all about you, you might create a negative impression on people who could hurt your career instead of helping. Good listening increases the odds of making a connection, and people will be more likely to remember you.
- **Try to make a personal connection.** It will build rapport and help you stand out. You can do that by sharing a personal story, which opens the door for the other person to do the same.
- **Keep everything positive.** Never bad-mouth a former boss or colleagues, or people in the room. Remember that everyone has a network, and you don't know who people know and respect.
- **Show sincerity and interest.** The best questions are ones that spark conversation, such as: What do you do at your company? What projects are you working on? How did you get into your field?
- **When you get someone's business card, take a minute to jot down anything important on the back.** It might be something personal that you can reference in a follow-up message. Always note



anything you promised to send or anyone you promised to introduce to them, so you can follow up. Don't wait to record these details, or you may forget.

3. Follow Up

- Within a few days, **send personalized thank you notes or e-mails.**
- **Request to connect with people on LinkedIn** (be sure to personalize the requests as well).
- **Keep a conversation going;** ask someone if you can take them for coffee to learn more about their field.
- And don't forget to **follow through on anything you promised to do.** Send that interesting article you mentioned. Introduce your new acquaintance who's getting married to your friend who makes homemade wedding invitations.

Overcoming a Fear of Networking

If you're shy or feel socially awkward or just sweat at the thought of trying to make an immediate good impression on a room full of strangers, don't let that stand in your way. Try some of these strategies:

- Arrive early, so there are fewer people and groups to approach.
- Bring a friend to walk the room with you.
- Volunteer for the event, so you'll have a reason to chat while you're setting up booths or running the registration table.
- Introduce yourself to someone else standing alone or who looks uncomfortable.
- Take some of the pressure off. Tell yourself you'll stay for 30 minutes, or make 3 good connections, or talk to five people wearing black, and then you can leave.
- Make it more fun by challenging a friend. The person with the least business cards buys coffee afterwards!

Remind yourself that your weakness may also be strength. Many introverts excel at listening and in one-on-one settings, which will help you make the connections you seek.



1. *Follow the steps in Appendix II to guide you through the process of designing your own elevator pitch.*
2. *Using the information you've studied in this section, identify three professional networking events within your area. Write down the information in the chart below and plan to attend them.*
3. *Attend the networking events you've identified and put this new knowledge into practice.*



	Event #1	Event #2	Event #3
Event Name			
Sponsoring Organization			
Contact Person Name			
Contact Person E-mail			
Contact Person Phone			
Event Date			
Event Location			
Cost (if any)			
Is RSVP Required?			
What is the last possible date for RSVP?			
Additional Notes			



To document the completion of the first two activities, we recommend that you save your work electronically in an easily accessible location, with an appropriate file name and date.

Alternatively, you may also print out your work and maintain the documents in your work search records. Be sure to properly label and date your print documents.



Confirm the applicable NH unemployment insurance requirements and be sure to follow them closely to avoid benefit disqualifications or overpayments.