



Networking



Employment experts agree that most job openings are never advertised. Only by knocking, do doors open. Creative job searching demands a lot of calling, handshaking, chatting, explaining and conversing, and many job seekers find this difficult. Still, it's important because networking is the best way to land a job.

Improving your networking skills will get you through the door to employers. Your networking efforts will help you uncover the hidden job market — defined as job openings that are not advertised.

Steps to Build Your Job Search Network

Step 1. Beginning a formal networking campaign is a good idea. Be genuine and sincere to each person you meet. Start by talking with people you know well, such as friends, family, neighbors and former (or current) coworkers. These people have the most interest in your success and are excellent networking contacts.

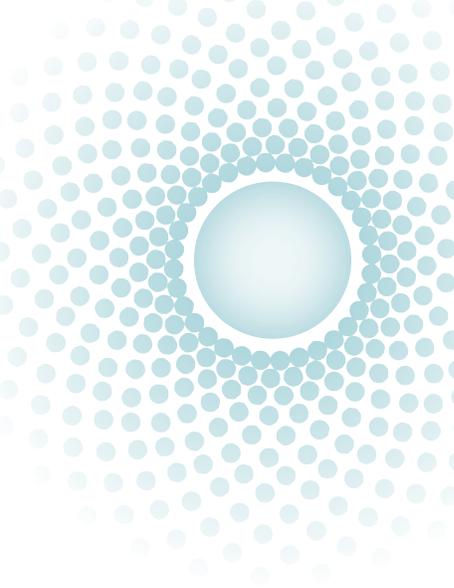
Step 2. Now, contact people who are occasionally in your life and career. More than 25 percent of the people who find jobs through networking received a referral from someone they see once a year or less.

Ask this group for ideas and referrals. Remind them of who you are and ask if they might be willing to meet for a 15-minute chat. Remember, honor that time limitation unless they insist on having you stay longer (a likely scenario since most people don't time conversations).

Step 3. Next, join job seeking networking groups in your industry, city or place of worship. Minnesota WorkForce Centers sponsor a host of networking groups around the state. You may get a tip or two from other participants in the group, along with solace, advice, conversation and camaraderie.

Step 4. Take those referrals and begin contacting them. These are the individuals you do not know, so you need to call and formally introduce yourself while highlighting the people who gave you their names. It's not an easy task and not everyone will call back or agree to





meet. Still, these are the people that may have the responsibility for hiring or know the appropriate individual in their companies for you to contact. Using social media websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest will also help you network.

Step 5. Finally, pick out companies where you would like to work and cold-call managers or employees, asking them for informational interviews or ideas for finding a job where they work.

They may avoid returning your call or tell you they have little to offer in the way of open positions. Still like that company? Try another division, or move down the list to the next prospective company in your sights.

Keep a Networking Log

Create a Networking Log to list people you contact about potential job leads. Write the names, the date(s), their phone numbers and any leads offered. If someone doesn't return your inquiry after a couple of calls, move on. Don't be a nuisance because it may harm more than help you.

Take notes during informational interviews, and afterward send an email or a personal handwritten thank you note or card to people that took the time to speak with you. Respect their time limits, and focus on getting the information you require in one informational interview. Always ask for more contacts to expand your list.

Networking is not begging. The idea is not to ask for jobs but to ask for information that may lead to a job. You want to meet with people that know about potential jobs or individuals in an industry who can help you. If you discover contacts are potential employers, switch gears and begin to sell your skills and how they fit the employer's needs.

Networking at Career Fairs

Many different organizations sponsor career fairs. These events feature employers that want to speak with job seekers about employment or new careers.

Career fairs can be a mixed experience. Attend them with the hope of making a few connections. You may find them worth your time or you may find your efforts are better spent pursuing other avenues of employment.

Job seekers can find more tips for preparing for a career fair on the **MinnesotaWorks.net** blog available on the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development website (<http://mn.gov/deed>).

For more job search guidance,
visit your local
WorkForce Center.

888-Get-JOBS
(888-438-5627) or visit
mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/job-guide



Minnesota
Department of Employment and Economic Development

Upon request, this information can be
made available in alternative formats.

Minnesota's WorkForce Centers
are equal opportunity employers
and service providers.