

Networking is the process of making intentional, career-related contacts through personal acquaintances and their referrals. The purpose of making those contacts is to gather information, advice, and references that will ultimately lead to interviews and employment offers. Since most job vacancies are not advertised, people usually find jobs through personal contacts and referrals. Individuals who use personal contacts to find jobs tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and earn higher incomes.

Prior to the Networking Situation or Opportunities:

- Identify your potential network – family, friends, co-workers, etc.
- Decide what you need to learn about a particular position or industry.
- Assess what you have to offer your next employer.
- Prepare a terrific résumé and have it reviewed by a Career Services Career Consultant.
- Summarize your résumé qualifications, or key selling points, onto a business card.
- Prepare questions for use in informal networking sessions. Topics may include:
 - Career Paths
 - Realities of the Working World
 - Job Responsibilities
 - State of the Industry
 - Money and Advancement
 - Education and Experience
 - Career Preparation
- For informal situations, prepare a one-minute introduction, or self-marketing statement, and incorporate several key conversation points on which you would like to elaborate if the opportunity should present itself.

During the Networking Situation or Opportunity:

- Be explicit about your purpose – to obtain information, not a job.
- Discuss your qualifications, but focus on the information received from the contact.
- Be courteous and concise.
- Ask clear questions.
- Distribute your personal business cards to your contacts, but be selective.
- Ask for additional referrals.
- Have a copy of your résumé available in case a contact requests it.

After the Networking Session:

- Always follow up promptly with a thank you note.
- Keep in touch with your contacts with periodic phone calls or e-mails.
- Maintain records of your contacts and people in your network. Be diligent to note how, what, why, when, where, and how you know the individual.
- Make notes on the back of business cards you receive. They may be very helpful in the future and will refresh your memory of past encounters.