



## Networking for Success: Who Will Connect You to Your Next Job?

By Emily Breckenridge

According to New York career-management firm, BH Careers International, 80% of all available jobs aren't posted in the classifieds or on job boards. Additionally, 60% of people surveyed by BH said they got their last job by networking [<http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/networking/20050215-bradford.html>]. Though networking can be awkward and uncomfortable, the fact is, it is the best way to find a job. Here are a few tips to help you develop, and successfully execute a networking strategy.

- 1) Prepare an elevator pitch.** Data shows that when you initially meet someone, their first impression of you is formed within the first two minutes they spend with you. After that first impression is formed, it is extremely difficult for it to be changed. A 30-second elevator pitch should be a part of every professional's job search arsenal, including yours, for this very reason. An elevator pitch is a quick speech that you have memorized in case you ever meet someone who you need to make a good, professional impression on. It is also a great starting point for beginning a conversation with employers at job fairs, or as a way of summarizing yourself at the beginning of an interview. Make it upbeat, and to the point, stating who you are, what you do and what you're looking for. For additional information on elevator pitches, check out *First Impressions: How to Deliver a Professional 30-second Elevator Pitch* from the September 18, 2007 issue of *TechNews*.
- 2) Keep your marketing tools up-to-date.** Keep your resume, and any social or professional network profiles up-to-date. You should provide a resume to all of your networking contacts as an initial point of reference, and send them a new one every time you add something new to it (i.e. a new degree or a new job). If you have a MySpace or other social networking site profile, make sure that it is appropriate, and that nothing on it would prevent a job offer if a potential employer saw it.
- 3) Tap into your existing network.** It's a small world, and you never know who your parents' friends or your friends' friends might know. Spread the word that you're looking for a job to family, friends and ex-colleagues, and ask if they might be able to offer any advice. Then have that network connect you to a broader one, by asking, "Do you know anyone else who might be helpful for me to meet?"
- 4) Become involved in an industry-specific association.** Professional organizations and associations are one of the best ways to expand your network. Student membership fees are usually inexpensive, and the benefits of membership definitely outweigh the cost. Professional associations are an easy way to connect with others in your field, and these connections often result in job referrals. Many associations also post job ads on their websites, sometimes limiting access to members. Many HR representatives report that they like to advertise, sometimes exclusively, on these sites, because good candidates are

usually members of professional organizations. Additionally, many HR representatives report that they use association conferences and/or trade shows to seek potential hires, because attendance and participation show that a person is committed to staying on the cutting edge of the field. To increase your visibility to HR at those events, don't just attend association events or trade shows – instead, participate! Volunteer to help organize a meeting or a part of the event, offer your expertise by presenting on a topic, or simply just ask educated questions.

**5) Take it slow.** If you've met someone for the first time whom you think would be a great person to have in your professional network, don't rush it. Build your relationship with your new contact before asking for help. Stacey L. Bradford of the Wall Street Journal suggests that you "Consider dropping a personal note to any new contact you meet at an industry event. Then follow-up, perhaps with a helpful article or introduction to someone you know."

**6) Networking is a two-way street.** Show your concern and interest for your networking contacts, and make sure that you are a benefit to all of them by referring them to positions for which you think they are qualified, and by putting them in touch with people whom you think might help them, etc. Ask them questions about themselves and their business experience. The more you help them, the more they will be inclined to help you.

**7) Don't ask for a job!** Instead, ask for advice. When you ask someone about their experience in a field, or for their advice on job searches, they are typically more generous with their time. If you are qualified for a job that they may have open, they'll ask you to apply.

**8) Mind your manners.** Always follow up a conversation or meeting with your networking contacts with a thank you note or email. Also, keep the contact updated on your job search by mentioning any interviews you've had recently or any offers you've received.

**9) Respect your contact's time.** Your contacts have their own responsibilities. Make sure that you respect their time by always being flexible, and by not continually asking for favors. Additionally, make sure that you do not call too often. If you're not sure what's too much, just ask them.

**10) Be in it for the long-run.** Your relationships with your networking contacts should not end when you begin a job. These should be relationships that you maintain long-term. Plan on staying in touch by arranging a monthly touch base with a few contacts where you call them or send them an email to update them on your career, and to find out if there is anything new going on in their lives. Fostering a long-term relationship can lead to further opportunity years from now.