

10 Common Networking Mistakes

1. Believing That Networking, By Itself, Will Solve All Of Your Job Search Problems

Don't put all your eggs in one basket! Although networking is one of the top approaches to developing job leads, you'll limit your search success if you rely on only one method, approach or technique.

2. Not Having A Set Of Well-Defined Objectives When You Talk To A Person In Your Network

Always remember that the time a network contact spends helping you is time they could have spent elsewhere. Be brief and specific about what you want. Be prepared to answer at least four (4) questions.

1. What you're trying to get from your contact (names, advice, company information, etc.)?
2. What are your immediate, mid-range and long term life/career goals?
3. What types of companies/organizations/ departments would you prefer to work?
4. Are there any special concerns to be addressed in your job search (disabilities, relocation, etc.)?

3. Not Maintaining Regular Follow-Up Contacts With The People In Your Network

Most people, by their own nature, like to help people. What they don't like is being used, abused and forgotten. Don't just make a contact to ask for help. Follow up with the folks in your network on a regular basis. Let them know how you're doing, what you found out and how your contact with them helped you.

4. Not Showing Up For Meetings Set Up By A Person In Your Referral Network

If you blow off an appointment that someone helped set up for you, you've lost that network contact forever, and given networking a black eye.

5. Using Avoidance Behaviors And Excuses To Not Network

Many people feel uncomfortable making network contacts. This results in excuses for not networking (I'm not social by nature." "I don't have time to network." "I don't know anyone in the field"). Networking shyness can be overcome with a little practice and a willingness to learn from your mistakes.

6. Not Making Networking A Daily Activity

Networking should become a part of life, not something especially done only when you need a job. At every social activity, try to meet a couple of new people and...:

- Find out what they do and for whom they work.
- Let them know something about your skills, talents, knowledge, abilities and career goals.
- Ask them for the names/numbers of two other people, who they think might be willing to talk to you.
- Ask them if it's ok to use their names when making a contact.

7. Poor Network Management

Documentation, organization and follow through are the Networker's friends. When able, set up a computer spreadsheet or database to track your network efforts.

8. Not Being Prepared To Accept Network Contact Rejection

Rejection is a normal function of networking. Not everyone you want to talk with will have the time to talk, or even want to talk with you. Be understanding about their situation and be prepared to accept rejection of a network contact graciously.

9. Not Casting A Wide Enough Net

Don't limit your network by thinking someone won't be of any help. Everybody knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone.

10. Not Saying "Thank you"

Say thank you verbally and in writing. Thank your network contacts for their time and any assistance that they have given you. You will be remembered by them and they will be more willing to assist you in the future.