

Networking is an essential element of job search today. Making contacts in your circle of friends, family and in the broader business community is your key to tapping into the hidden job market and finding those jobs that never make it to the internet postings.

### WHAT IS NETWORKING?

- Building and maintaining relationships
- Connecting to job and / or business communities
- Getting help and helping others
- Connecting to people who may have what you want, know others who do or play a role in the hiring decision.

### WHY NETWORK?

Experts agree that approximately 80% of all jobs come from networking versus the traditional methods of job search, like newspaper ads and online job boards.

### HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE NETWORKER

Whether done at a *formal meeting* or more *informally at a business or social function*, the secret to performing well is to **be prepared**. Preparation consists of three things: knowing yourself, what you want and who you need to talk to.

#### Plan in advance

Know what you have to offer. Your education, your interests and your experiences have given you a wide range of skills. Be able to articulate the skills you have, how you developed them, and recent examples (within the last few years) of how you used them. Prepare this into a *30-second to one-minute business introduction*. Practice using your introduction. Know the company and/or position that you are interested in learning more about. Plan some questions to help you gain more information.

#### Know the organization

If you are attending a specific employer's function, research! research! research! Try to go beyond the obvious easy-to-find information about the organization and its needs. Begin with the organization's web site, and then research external sites for background information. Keep up to date with company/industry press releases via <http://www.canadanewswire.ca>. The best way to learn about organizations is by speaking to company representatives—attend panels and career fairs, make calls using networking contacts. Access a list of employer information site links at <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers>. Go to Find Employment; Resources and Links. Click on links under Researching Organizations.

#### Attend networking functions

Get out to every function that you can manage. Opportunities exist to attend employer -sponsored events through UTM (see the Career Centre web site). Other opportunities include joining professional associations, joining business networking groups, and volunteering for clubs and committees. Find contacts in your target business sector or industry, and make an appointment to meet with them to obtain information about the industry or your target job (see Conduct Information Interviews section below).

#### Conduct Information Interviews

When you ask for a formal meeting with a contact to learn more about the industry, the jobs and/or their company, this is referred to as requesting an Information Interview. Current published statistics show that Information Interviews are up to 86% effective in uncovering opportunities that lead to jobs. Visit the Career Centre to learn more.

**When attending networking functions, keep the following in mind:**

- Go with a specific goal in mind. Examples: to make three good contacts for future job search, to learn more about consulting firms, etc.
- Prepare and ask one or two effective, well-researched questions. Prospective employers are impressed by your interest in their organization and demonstrated ability to research.
- Bring business cards (if you have them), resources to keep track of who you met and how they might help you—or vice versa if you promised to do something for them. Keep your business cards in your left pocket. This leaves your right hand free for shaking hands. Put their business cards in your right pocket to keep them separate from yours.
- Force yourself to circulate. Remember that everyone is there to meet people and you are helping people when you approach them. Though it is tempting to take a friend along with you, there is a natural inclination to “stick together” which discourages people from approaching you. Try to separate.
- Listen closely to each person you meet. Maintain eye contact at all times and make it a habit to repeat things so they know you have been listening.
- Ask people for advice; people like to be consulted and to talk about areas of expertise. Use this as an opportunity to learn more about your chosen field.
- Don't be shy about approaching a group of people who are already talking. Chances are they are ready for fresh insight. Hover near the group until someone makes eye contact, then smile and introduce yourself. If someone asks about what you do, then you have the opportunity to give your 30-second introduction.
- Be positive, enthusiastic and smile. Stand straight in a relaxed yet confident posture. It will attract people to you and leave a longer impression on potential employers.
- Use people's names and be sure to pronounce them correctly. Remember to shake hands firmly (but not too firmly). If you are unable to shake hands for cultural or medical reasons, briefly explain.
- Be aware of body language—if someone's eyes are wandering, they are losing interest in what you are saying and likely either want a chance to say something or to move on to someone else.
- Never try to sell yourself, rather try to develop a relationship by demonstrating your skills.
- Follow up on leads immediately. If someone asks you to contact them the next day, do so. They or someone they know may be able to help.
- Keep track of your contacts with details about how to reach them and also how they can help you. Stay in touch on a regular basis to let them know how your job search is going.
- Find ways to do something for your contacts. Networking is a two-way street!

**UTM CAREER CENTRE RESOURCES**

- *Effective Networking Workshops* are held regularly at the UTM Career Centre. Check our calendar of events: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/calendar.html>
- Book an appointment with an *Employment Advisors* or *Career Counsellors* to plan your networking approach and practice your 30-second introduction
- Drop by to watch the *Building a Network for Work and Life* video, by JIST Publishing (1999)
- *Networking for Job Search and Career Success* book, by Michelle Tullier (2004)
- *How to Find a Job on LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other Social Networks* book, by Brad and Debra Schepp (2010)
- *Work the Pond* book, by Darcy Rezac (2005)
- *The Art of Mingling* book, by Jeanne Martinet (2006).

This tip sheet is intended as a counselling document and the information is subject to change. (Updated June 2011)