

NETWORKING 101

Networking is an essential part of your job search. Making contacts in your circle of friends, family and in the broad business community is your key into tapping in the *hidden job market* – job postings that are not advertised in sources such as the internet or newspapers. Research has indicated that 80% of all jobs come from networking versus the traditional methods of job search such as online job boards.

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking includes everything from a casual conversation with a friend to an informational interview with a potential employer. Networking does not mean you ask everyone you run into for a job. Rather, it is about building and maintaining relationships so you can comfortably ask for ideas, advice, recommendations and referrals to those who play a role in the hiring decision.

WHY NETWORK?

- Broadens employment opportunities – leads to hidden/unadvertised job openings
- Connect to new people – become an ‘inside’ connection at a company
- Gain insights into industry / profession
- Get insiders’ tips or advice on job search methods
- Develop and practice your ‘soft’ skills

WHO IS IN YOUR NETWORK?

Your network is probably bigger than you think. It includes people you feel comfortable contacting including:

- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Former employers / co-workers
- Members of clubs or community organizations you belong to
- Former teachers, instructors & coaches
- Alumni groups e.g. LinkedIn BCIT Alumni Tool

GROWING YOUR NETWORK

You can expand your network in a number of ways. Some useful approaches include:

1. Professional Associations

Joining a professional association is a great way to meet people in your field of interest. You can attend professional development seminars, tradeshow and information events. Even non-members may be able to see an organization’s online newsletter or member list to identify potential contacts and opportunities. (See list of Professional Associations).

2. Volunteering

Volunteering provides opportunities for you to meet new people, including community leaders, industry professionals and potential business and employment contacts. You will not only develop personal and professional relationships, but can hear about job openings, gather insider employment information add the experience to your resume and develop great references.

- GoVolunteer.ca <http://govolunteer.ca/>
- Charity Village <https://charityvillage.com/app/>
- Volunteer BC <http://volunteerbc.bc.ca>
- City of Vancouver - Green Volunteer
 - <https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/green-volunteer-opportunities.aspx>

3. Attend Network Events

How to Create Connections

Pre-event:

- Find the right event to attend to that connects you to people within your area of interest
- Prepare your introduction, personal pitch. What is your story?
 - Who you are, what you do, show passion in your work/studies instead of labeling your title
 - Develop a 30 sec pitch. Keep it simple!
- Get a list of attendees, research their company, profile
- Prepare a list of questions to ask. Be curious! Some topics of discussion
 - How did you get started in your business?
 - What did you like best about it?
 - What changes do you expect to see in your industry?
 - What are some of your biggest challenges?
- Set a goal, how many people do you intend to meet? Be clear about your objectives, know what you're going for
- Order business cards

During the Event:

- Be proactive! Be the first to extend a firm handshake and introduce yourself - this simple first impression is a big one!
- Start small. A networking event is not about getting your next job. It is about building new business relationships and exchanging information to ask for ideas, advice and referrals
- Take initiative with questions. Asking questions allow you to start the conversation, people love to share their wisdom, advice and recommendations
- Make eye contact to the person you're speaking to and remember to smile!
- Exude confidence, be positive and have a professional appearance

- Be careful to balance to conversation, be inclusive, give others a chance to speak
- Remember to circulate. You gain more from connecting with several people than only 1-2 individuals
- Ending a conversation: Be aware of non-verbal cues/signals they are ready to end the conversation with you. Wrap up and ask for their full name or business card and thank them for their time
 - *"It has been a pleasure talking to you. I don't want to take up all your time but hope to see you at future events."*
- Be aware of alcohol consumption as many networking events serve alcohol, best to limit yourself

Post Event

- Record main points of conversation on the back of the other's business card
- Build the connection, aim to send out an email or LinkedIn request within a few days
- Nurture and continue building connections – different ways to follow up
 - Send a personalized thank you note to individuals who gave you advice
 - Follow up on a topic of conversation
 - Ask for something you need – a contact, information etc.
 - Send articles, news clips or information that may interest them
 - Invite the person to an event that is of interest or value to them

Food for Thought: Networking with the right mindset

- Networking is a *life skill*, not a sales skill: It is about building mutually beneficial positive relationships with people, not a transactional, one- time occurrence
- Don't always look for immediate prospects, build alliances. Referrals could happen through unexpected sources
- Embrace the concept of expanding your network
- Make friend and have fun! Focus on the process (build relationships), then the outcome. The best moments can be meeting people you did not expect to meet

4. Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a brief meeting with someone working in an area of interest to you for advice and information. It is **not** a job interview or calling someone up and asking for a job.

Information interviews may help you in the following ways:

- Get a personal perspective about the realities of working in a field, industry or position. This kind of information is not always available online
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field; meet people who may forward job leads to you in the future
- Obtain advice and information that may help you target your job search efforts
- Hear about opportunities before they are posted (i.e. hidden job market)
- **Review the online resource on how to conduct an Informational Interview*

Where to Network

- Meetup www.meetup.com You can quickly search industry events and networking opportunities in your area.
- Eventbrite www.eventbrite.ca Great for industry specific events. Simply type in what you're looking for
- Board of Trade / Chamber of Commerce e.g. Burnaby Board of Trade
- Tradeshows www.vancouverconventioncentre.com
- Networking in Vancouver www.networkinginvancover.com
- Toastmasters www.toastmasters.org
- Community Events ([Vancouver](#), [Tri-Cities](#), [Burnaby](#))
- Business in Vancouver <https://biv.com/events>
- Professional Associations (see resource)
- Social Media Platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Career Fairs
- Participate in on-campus employer events. Use Career Track for events calendar; register here <https://www.bcitsa.ca/careerservices/career-track/>
- Meet with your Career Specialist to hear about networking opportunities, job leads