



Uncovering the hidden job market through networking

Developing your network

Many people go through their whole careers without ever applying for an advertised job. New opportunities come to them through their network. As many as **60% of jobs are filled this way via the hidden job market; unlisted, unpublished, and unadvertised jobs.**

Often these jobs are created especially for someone who has been referred or recommended, or become formalised only once the employer meets the right person to act on an opportunity they had been contemplating. Possibly the employer knows that someone in their existing staff will be moving on but has

not yet advertised the role formally.

Networking – a technique better known as “word of mouth” – is the most effective way to reach this “hidden” job market. Anyone can use networking to find opportunities. It simply requires a more conscious and systematic approach to working through the people you know. This article explains the basic techniques.

The major advantage of tapping in to the hidden job market is dramatically reduced competition. Unlike most advertised positions, people who source jobs via their network or by a direct approach do not have to compete with large fields (think hundreds plus) of applicants.

Networking operates by sharing information and making new connections. People “in the know” can tell you what is going on in their industry, and good people know other good people.

In New Zealand, statistics suggest that you are only two people away from any other person. This “two degrees of separation” implies that you know someone who knows someone who knows the person who can help you get your “dream job”.

What is a network?

- A group of people who will act as eyes and ears for you out in the marketplace
- People who might uncover a job opportunity for you

How do you write a network list?

- Use brainstorming techniques
- Include as many people as you can think of
- Don't exclude anyone you think can help!

Who is on your network list?

- Workmates
- Colleagues in your previous organisation
- Colleagues who have moved to other organisations
- Ex-supervisors
- Staff who have worked for you
- People who have sold products to you
- Friends
- People you know socially who might know what is going on in particular companies
- LinkedIn / FaceBook contacts

How does networking work?

The purpose of networking is to:

- Establish new, beneficial “connections”
- Develop rapport (chemistry)
- Get information about target industries or companies, employment trends and actual job openings
- Obtain the names of other relevant people you can meet
- Gain personal exposure and to be remembered

You probably wonder whether people will take time away from their busy schedules to talk with you. They will, because:

- They already know you, or you have been referred to them by someone they know
- Meeting with you helps keep them informed, up-to-date, and well-connected
- Experts love to share their expertise (provided you don't ask for job leads or other things they are not in a position to give you)

Networking meetings are information meetings

Networking meetings are to share information and make new connections, not to sell yourself to an employer. Be prepared to listen, to ask questions, and to show interest in the other person.

General guidelines

Initial networking contacts come from many sources: former employers and co-workers, friends, relatives, neighbours, professional associations, schools, teachers, doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants and many more.

Whenever possible, conduct networking meetings face-to-face, not by telephone. Personal exposure makes a far stronger impression than a voice on the phone.

Be very careful to respect the time of the person you are meeting with. Successful networking meetings are focused on sharing information and can be completed in 30 minutes or less. This doesn't necessarily mean that you have to cut short a meeting that is going well, but you should make sure that you don't inadvertently run on too long.

Bring copies of your CV with you, but don't start the meeting by showing it. Even the best CV is a poor substitute for your own words about your interest, skills and background. Plan to give your CV to your contact at the end of the meeting.

Even better, provide multiple copies of your Pocket Resume©. The size of a business card, it succinctly communicates the key things people need to know about you before deciding whether to meet you:

- who you are
- what you are
- what you are looking for
- your key skills and experience
- how you can be contacted

Give it to anyone you think can promote you to a potential employer or connect you to others in their networks. Because Pocket Resume© is small, it's easy for the other person to pass on. Pocket Resume© is an exclusive service to clients of Successful Résumés New Zealand.

Dress well. Although these meetings may be "informal," you want to be remembered for your professional image.

Asking for meetings

First of all, remember that the purpose of a networking letter or a phone call is to get meetings to share information. You are not applying for a job.

Both letters and telephone calls work well for setting up meetings. Neither has to be long or formal. First mention who referred you, then say that you are conducting a job search and that you would appreciate a brief meeting to get some information and advice. Be specific. You can give a short summary of your background and job objective, but do not go into great detail. Ask if you might get together at a convenient time:

"John Jones suggested that I talk with you about my interest in chemical engineering. He thought you would be an excellent person to give me some information about"

Then give a brief objective and summary.

"Perhaps we could meet briefly sometime during the next two weeks. I would greatly appreciate your help in identifying my options and commenting on my job search

strategy. Would early or late next week suit you best?"

or "Would Wednesday morning or Thursday afternoon be best for you?"

An agenda for networking meetings

A clear agenda is useful for keeping meetings moving and on track:

Take the pressure off! After friendly introductions and thanks for meeting, mention the person who referred you.

Explain the purpose of the meeting:

What I am looking for at this point is some information about..."

Make sure the person knows that you did NOT ask for the meeting to ask for a job:

"Although I have begun a job search, I want to make it clear that I did not come here to ask YOU for a job or even expect that you know of an opening"

Give a brief personal profile, summarise why you are looking for a job, what kind of job you are looking for, your general background, work experience, and several specific strengths. This should take no more than two minutes. You can practice this short introduction at home.

Ask specific, prepared questions and gather information. Take notes. You might ask the person's views about trends in your industry. Some potentially useful questions are included later in this section.

Answer the person's questions of you clearly and succinctly. Remember the

person may also be interested in your knowledge in a particular market. That way the networking meeting is mutually beneficial. The person might also be questioning you to verify your depth of knowledge in your field to understand who to refer you to.

Ask for names of other people you might meet or talk with to gather more information. Be as specific as you can



about the types of people you want to make contact with.

Close courteously and positively, thanking the contact for the meeting and indicating that you will stay in touch. Ask if an updated copy of your CV would be helpful. Also leave one or two copies of your Pocket Resume©. Ask if you could have his/her business card.

Questions you can ask at networking meetings

Do you think my job objective is realistic? Clear? Focused?

What general trends do you see in the _____ industry?

What is the normal salary range for someone with my background and experience?

Would my chances be better with a big company or a smaller one?

How can I find more information about _____ (industry issues)?

Are there any skills I should learn or special study I might pursue that would improve my employment opportunities in my field?

What are the advancement opportunities for someone with my skills and background?

Are there any particular companies that are leaders in this industry / in this area?

What have you learned about _____ company? (in terms of hiring wages ... being a good place to work ... job security and advancement)

How did you get into this field?

What do you like most about this industry?

Whom do you know that I might benefit from talking with?

Following up and tracking progress

After each meeting, remember to send a thank-you letter, addressing any unanswered questions. Use this note to emphasise your interest in remaining in contact with this person, that you wish to keep him or her informed of your progress, as well as anything new you learn about the issues you discussed.

Job search log book

Include the dates that you contact any member of your network in your job search log book.

You will get valuable referrals and names of people to talk to about jobs from these networking meetings. Be sure to keep some record or log of your meeting activity and follow-up, so you don't lose track of who you have met and how they helped you. Some people use a loose-leaf

notebook with a separate page for each company, contact or meeting.

Job search activity

If your job search slows down, you need to increase your daily networking. Persistence, increased relevant contacts and exposure boost your possibilities.

Assessing your networking progress

The best way to monitor your networking progress is to ask yourself the following questions after each meeting. Remember, every meeting is worthwhile, if for no other reason than to practise how you describe the career goals you've set for yourself.

- What did I learn about the industry, company, department function and my networking contact?
- What did I learn about needs,

- problems and critical issues in my industry?
- Was I given the names of other people to contact?
- Did I learn anything new about myself and my career goals? Should I alter the focus of my search based on the information received?
- Did I create a pleasant environment for the meeting? Should I practise the presentation of my situation and aspirations and what I hope to gain from the meeting?

Questions about career change options

How did you get into this field ... or obtain your job?

On a typical day, what do you do in the position you now hold?

What are the responsibilities of your job?

What are the most interesting aspects of your job? What are the drawbacks?

What part of your work do you consider dull and repetitious?

How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this career?

Are there other areas of this field to transfer to ... what are they?

What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?

Are there any specific courses one might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?

What journals or magazines would you recommend I read in this field?

What types of training do companies give to people entering this field?

What are the most common problems of this job ... firm ... industry?

What is the salary range for various levels in this field?

Are there any other jobs that are similar to yours but with different job titles?

Is there a demand for people in this field?

How do you see the job in this field changing over the next ten years? What can I do to prepare myself for such change?

Whom do you know that I might benefit from talking with?

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