

*Building Success through
Strong Networking*

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Marshall Brown, a certified career and executive coach, has always had a passion for helping people find ways to live more fulfilling lives. He found that a personalized, "no nonsense" approach to coaching was the most efficient and effective way to get people on a successful life course. As a coach, Marshall helps individuals find their passions and encourages them to move ahead in reaching their goals. His first book, *High Level Résumés*, reflects his successful work with hundreds of job candidates. He is a Past Board President of the DC Chapters of the International Coach Federation and the Association of Career Professionals, International. Marshall holds a Bachelors Degree in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh and is certified by the International Coach Federation, Career Coach Institute and the Coaches Training Institute.

THE BASICS

- At least 48% of all job changes happen through networking
- It not just “Who you know” but “Who knows you?”
- Career networking is a skills set for overall career and life success
- The relationships you build today and sustain through tomorrow serve as valuable short-term and long-term investments throughout your career
- Effective networking allows you to leverage a whole team of people helping you find the right position

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING

Be authentic

Be yourself. Don't be concerned about what others might think. (That is sometimes difficult, but you owe yourself to try it.) Be real. Don't try to be the "want to be" you. Let people see, and get to know, the real you.



Know what you have to offer

Start conversations with people and tell them what you have to offer. Be bold! Be fearless! Speak intelligently and have interesting things to say (about you, your profession, current events, etc.).

Have a 30-second elevator speech ready

This is a quick marketing response for the question most often asked (but usually not taken advantage of): "What do you do for a living?" Your response to this question needs to clearly describe what you can do for an employer and also let people know that you are currently seeking career opportunities. Remember, you are in a selling position and you are the product. Why should someone hire you? What do you offer that others don't? As an executive, what successes have you had?

Avoid closed-ended questions

Seek to get the other person to talk and then really listen. Instead of asking, "Do you know anyone who...?" ask, "Whom do you know who...?" This will allow for discussion and problem solving instead of a one-word negative response that stops conversation.

Use active listening skills

When the other person is talking, do not consider your response in your head. Instead, just listen. Look into the speaker's eyes and give verbal and nonverbal clues that you are listening and understanding.

Call someone you know and invite them to go with you

You will know at least one person and you won't be alone. Make a plan with them to meet two or three new folks. Turn it into a game if that helps. "You meet two people, and I will meet two people – that way we can introduce each other and get to know four people each." Check in with each other, support each other and then reward yourselves for going to an event and meeting new people.

If you are not comfortable with large events, try starting off with some smaller networking opportunities

Maybe it means getting involved with an association or group of folks where you can be on a council or committee. They tend to have smaller, more intimate meetings. Get to know some folks that way, so that when you do go to the larger events, you already know people.

Whatever you do, don't come across as pushy

People sense desperation and neediness. It doesn't engage them. Don't be overly aggressive, follow people around or talk incessantly about what you have to offer. And don't just walk around passing out your business cards. Networking is not about how many cards you can give away; it's about **developing relationships** with people.

Great networkers don't just go to events (small or large) to promote themselves

They also contribute something to the people they meet. Be sure to know what you can contribute and listen to what other people need.

CAREER NETWORKING: DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:	DON'T:
Talk to as many people as you possibly can	Limit yourself!
Start with 1 or 2 people for practice (if you are unsure)	Rely on others to connect you
Meet "like-minded" people	
Join associations, organizations	Think it can all happen on the internet
Ask questions	
Ask for additional contacts	
Have a business card	
Build relationships	Be afraid to ask for help
Volunteer	
Organize your contact list	
Keep in touch with your contacts	
Continue to develop your network even after you have found a job	Stop networking! It is an on-going process
Thank everyone in your network	Forget to thank everyone

TOP 7 BIGGEST NETWORKING BLUNDERS

Blunder #1: Not networking when you're employed

Networking should not be thought of as strictly a job search technique when you're unemployed – it's a lifelong career management strategy. Networks often really pay off in the long term, so if you think of it as a short-term tool to get you a job when you need it, you're missing the point. Your network can pay off at any time, and you will definitely appreciate the work you put into it when you really do need it. As Harvey Mackay says, you have to dig your well before you're thirsty!

Blunder #2: Asking and not giving

Building a network should not be all about what YOU want. If you always take and never offer to give anything back to the people in your network, your network will surely crumble. Know what you can offer in return, or better yet, ask them what they need. Send someone in your network an interesting article, offer to take them to lunch every so often, or at the very least, end your conversation with "Now, what can I do for you?" That's how you keep your networking vibrant. Remember, the best way to get great networking contacts is to be one yourself!

Blunder #3: Not following up

If you promise to call them, call them. If you say you'll email them, email them. If you say you'll stay in touch, then you have to stay in touch. Not following up kills your network.

Blunder #4: Not managing/tracking your networking data

If you have to spend more than 10 seconds looking for a contact's business card or contact information, you need a better system. Have a dedicated and well organized filing system, categorize business cards if it will help, or buy some useful software. It's also a good idea to keep a log of whom you've spoken to, when you spoke, what you spoke about, when you are to follow up, and any other pertinent info.

Blunder #5: Using a "canned" commercial

Networking is about building relationships, and the worst way to start one off is with an over-rehearsed "canned" commercial about you. Be genuine, be yourself, build a relationship, and leave the canned commercials for the infomercial hosts on TV. If you must use a 30-second elevator speech, make certain it sounds like you and rolls off the tongue like real conversation...then work on building the relationship.

Blunder #6: Trying to network in a bubble

Networking requires getting yourself out there. Yes, you can network within your own familiar community of contacts but if you really want to soar you have to reach a bit farther. Attend meetings, volunteer somewhere, join an association, write an article, respond to the author of a great article, join a networking group, etc. Make yourself visible.

Blunder #7: Not having a plan

While good networking can have its comfortable social side, you still need to treat it seriously and have a goal or objective from each networking meeting. What do you want to accomplish? What information could you use? What can you offer to your contact? Who should be in your network? Who needn't be in your network? How can you grow your network? Like anything else, you have to plan it out to get the best results.

NETWORKING FOR INTROVERTS

Networking is very easy for extroverts, but for introverts the prospect of “meeting and greeting” can be very difficult. Here are a few tips to help get you introverts out there into the networking game:

Change the name

Don't think of it as “networking” – that word has a scary connotation. Think of it as gathering information. In your job, if you need to gather information from somewhere, you very often have to get in touch with someone. So, to begin your networking, treat it like a research project: simply contact those people who have the information you need, and keep in touch every so often.

Go with a buddy

Going alone to a networking or business event can be intimidating, and even if you gather the nerves to go on your own, chances are you'll hang out by the cheese platter most of the time trying not to look as awkward and uncomfortable as you feel. Go with a buddy and operate as a team – it works.

Get the other person talking

If you don't know how to start a conversation, ask open-ended questions that get the other person talking about themselves. “So, what brings you here?” “How did you get started in this field?” “Tell me what you do.” People love to talk about themselves, and provided you show genuine interest in their response, they'll think you're a great conversationalist.

Join a networking group

Sometimes the scary part of networking is that it's perceived as a social activity without any “structure” – a wide open space where you have to make contacts yourself. There are formal networking groups out there that have the structure introverts need. Many allow you to join small dedicated groups that meet regularly, allowing you to take the time you need to get comfortable with everyone. Others, on a bigger scale, hold networking events where you are assigned a table, they give you a task (speak to 2 people at your table), and then rotate tables. By the end of the meeting, you've met 5 or 6 people.

Passive networking options

The last thing to tell an introvert is that networking can be done alone in front of the computer, but honestly there are more “passive” options out there that can help expand your network (I said “expand” your network, not “be” your network). For example, options include sending an email to the author of an article, writing an article yourself (gets your name out there as a start), joining a Usenet group, or joining some of the online e-networking sites such as LinkedIn.com, Ryze.com or Yahoo!Groups.com. Add these more passive strategies to your networking plan and your network is on its way!

TELEPHONE NETWORKING TIPS

- Mention the name of your referral source, organization or company in your first sentence. – help them make the connection with you.
- Know something special about the person to make it easier to establish a rapport. “We are looking to improve our coaching program and I understand you have a comprehensive coaching program. Would you be willing to talk with me about it? I am particularly interested in...”
- Create a script to get you started, but don’t read it.
- Take a deep breath and sit up straight.
- Speak energetically, but not hysterically.
- Say your name slowly and clearly – make an analogy to help them remember.
- Give your phone number – pause at the dash or period. Repeat the number.
- Keep it succinct.
- Tell them what you want and how much time will it take.
- What’s in it for them? What can you offer them for their time? A summary of the research? Other contact?
- Ask, “When is a good time to call you?” Give your availability, too.
- Make their Administrative Assistant your ally.



NETWORKING AT CONFERENCES

- Be an active participant in seminar discussions – be willing to initiate, facilitate or report on behalf of your small discussion groups.
- At the end of seminars that really interested you, ask the group if anyone would like to continue the discussion during a break or over dinner. Meet and talk more with anyone who indicates interest, and have a professional discussion on the topic. Be willing to share what you know while respecting others’ expertise and opinions as well.
- Find out as much about their professional interests and expertise as you can without coming across as pushy.
- Exchange business cards afterward.
- Print stickers for the back of the business cards you take to the conference that say "We met at <Conference Name> in <Month/Year>" – they might not think to do that, and it will remind them how they know you.
- Write the topic you discussed on the business card before turning it over – again, this will jog their memory.
- Get their business cards, and link their contact info to your notes about their interests and expertise.

- Email them the week after the conference to tell them how much you enjoyed the discussion (but don't ask for business or a job).
- Email them several weeks or months later with a question that interests you on a topic in which they have expertise – don't forget to remind them where you met. See if this develops into a conversation.
- For the people who would exchange email, follow any paths that present themselves during your discussions that pertain to your long-term or short-term goals.
- Remember the Exhibitors – introduce yourself to selected exhibitors and let them know your interests; leave a business card so they can help connect you with others with similar interests.
- Never eat alone; as much as you may want to re-charge, this is the best opportunity to make connections.

YOUR 30-SECOND COMMERCIAL (or “ELEVATOR SPEECH”)

Knowing how to articulate your value and your expertise in a short and concise way is immensely valuable to your networking and job search success...but to be effective, it has to be genuine and it has to have meaning. It's not just a summary of you or your career.

- Never memorize your 30-second commercial...it should come out differently every time. Just know what you want to say, and practice talking about it in different ways. You should know what points you want to hit, but it should sound genuinely conversational, not rehearsed.
- Avoid sounding like your résumé. Writing and talking are different, and should be approached differently.
- Instead of boring them with just a list of skills or experience, make certain you include strong “value” statements – something that cuts to the heart of what you help your employers achieve (*i.e.*, the benefit from the work you do).

So instead of just saying “I’m a Controller with 22 years experience” you could say “My speciality is looking after a company’s most prized possession – their balance sheet. I look after the bottom line and help companies achieve more with the resources they have.” **Then** you can say “I’m a Controller with over 22 years experience...”

- When you deliver your 30-second commercial, practice making it sound **natural**. This may take a bit of practice, but make certain you throw in the pauses, inflections, and little features that make conversational speech natural

TIP: Here’s a little exercise to practice sounding natural. Pick a topic you know LOTS about – it could be anything (cooking, gardening, football, art, whatever) – and start talking about it. Chances are you know what to say, you sound intelligent, AND you sound natural because it’s not rehearsed. You just know what to say. That’s the conversational tone you want to shoot for – natural and professional.

E-NETWORKING SITES

Linked In

<https://www.linkedin.com>

Craigs List – by city or area

<http://www.craigslist.org/>

Ryze

<http://www.ryze.com>

Fast Company Community of Friends

<http://www.fastcompany.com/community>

Yahoo! Groups

<http://groups.yahoo.com>



NETWORKING ETIQUETTE: RESPECTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS

- By Robert Half International

A professional network is indispensable when you're looking for a job. Your contacts can suggest promising leads or put you in touch with firms that are hiring. They may provide you with first-hand information about a company or give you the name of a staff member they know. In some cases, someone in your network might even be able to help set up a meeting with a hiring manager. At the very least, your contacts can provide encouragement.

But this doesn't mean your network is an inexhaustible gold mine that exists solely for your use and benefit. Following are some right and wrong ways to tap your contacts during a job search.

Target your approach

While it's important to tell everyone in your network you're seeking employment to get the most job leads possible, focus on people who could offer the most help for you. For example, you should first concentrate on those in your profession, since they'll have relevant information about the hiring climate. You should also talk to individuals who work for companies where you've submitted your résumé. Before you make a call or send an email message, take a moment to clarify what you want most from your contacts. Are you looking for a specific job? Do you need help arranging a meeting with a prospective employer? Do you want them to pass your résumé on to their contacts? Make sure your request is not only specific but also reasonable. For example, if your contact is not executive-level, he or she may not be in a position to provide an introduction to the head of the company.

Don't abuse your network

There are certain things you can reasonably anticipate from your contacts, such as professionalism and courtesy. And there are a few things you should not expect. These include:

- An immediate response to your request for assistance
- Countless hours of their time
- Use of a contact's name as a door-opener without his or her permission

Most of your contacts will try to be helpful, but this doesn't mean you should take advantage of their generosity. If someone promises to get back to you, don't pressure him with repeat calls. Keep in mind that, although your job search is a top priority for you, it doesn't rank quite that high for those in your network. They have multiple and competing demands on their time. Your voice- or email message is likely one of many.

Make networking two-way

Networking should benefit both parties. Therefore, you should be prepared to give as well as receive. This can be as simple as saying to a contact, "Thank you so much for your help. Please call me if there's ever anything I can do to repay the favor."

You don't have to wait to reciprocate.

For example, you could email a pertinent article with a short note ("Thought you might find this interesting"), or offer to introduce your contact to other professionals in your network. If a contact really goes out of her way to help, consider treating her to a celebration lunch when you do land a job.

Keep in regular contact with members of your network. You'll become familiar with their interests and better able to help when it's your turn to be someone else's career resource.

By observing these simple rules of networking etiquette, you'll avoid alienating your contacts while ultimately strengthening your professional connections.

10 POWERFUL NETWORKING TIPS USING BUSINESS CARDS

- by Carl E. Reid

Whether you are looking for a job or running a business, giving out business cards is crucial to marketing your skills or services. Even as a job seeker, develop the mindset of running the business of YOU, Inc. Business cards speak volumes about who you are, what you offer and how seriously you are marketing YOU, Inc. as a business. Oh, so you have a résumé and don't need business cards...Can you carry 10 résumés in your wallet? Do you or can you carry your résumé everywhere you go? A church bell ringing lets people know they are open for business. Your business card is your bell. Here are some proven tips using business cards to increase your chances of landing a job or creating a business opportunity.

1. Never leave home without them

Before leaving home, your checklist should be expanded to include business cards, as part of "do I have my wallet/money, house keys, driver's license" Any 'per chance' meeting is an opportunity to give out a business card. A morning run or a quick trip to the local store could be an opportunity to network. My wife and I always ask each other 'do you have business cards', before leaving the house. Make it a habit to carry business cards.

2. Insert a business card when mailing bill payments

Bills contain advertisements. Why can't you advertise your skills or services the same way' Insert a business card with your payment. You may not think a person in South Dakota who opens your credit card bill payment can help you. Never underestimate the power of networking. A movie, entitled '6 Degrees of Separation' points out we are 6 people away from knowing someone of influence. You could be 6 people away from knowing the President of the United States, your favorite movie star or someone who is in a position to hire your skills or services. Each of us knows someone, who knows someone, who knows someone etc. Developing this powerful networking attitude will be a fundamental source of continued success.

3. Use proper business card etiquette

Whenever you give a business card, ask for a business card. When given a business card, don't just take it and place it in your pocket. Make the person feel important by looking at their card for a few seconds. You might see something that could be a topic of discussion. Write comments on the card such as date, location and common points of interest. These comments will prove valuable when following up with that person. This also demonstrates a sincere interest in the other person. Then place it in your wallet. This lets them know they reside in a special place with you. "Skill with People" by Les Giblin is a book that expands on this approach. Make people feel important, in order to make yourself important to them.

4. Be generous

Give business cards out to everyone, including family and friends. Don't let vanity stop you from giving out your last business card or giving 2 at a time to each person. I have met many people who have totally missed the purpose of a business card. I once asked a person for a second business card, so I could refer his services. His response was "I only have a few cards left and I need them", as he looked again at his name on the card. Hoarding your business cards only makes your wallet feel full, not your bank account.

5. Ask for referrals

When giving a business card, people feel more comfortable when you ask: 'I would appreciate a referral if you know anyone that could use my services.' Don't make people feel like they are on the spot. This approach disarms people much better than asking them, 'Is your company hiring?' People naturally like to do favors for people. Say something like, 'Could you do me a favor by referring my services to someone?' This always places you in a better position with them. They will feel better about helping you. Give them two cards.

6. Maximize every "per chance" meeting

You never know when you might meet someone who can help you. Family or friends social events could produce unexpected encounters with people. Don't discount those events. So you're going to a birthday party for your friend's kid. You never know who you might meet. At a family holiday gathering last year, I met someone that has been instrumental in developing our business this year. Who would have thought this could happen by giving him a simple business card.

7. Place yourself at the right place at the right time

Have you been to a job fair or business conference and been disappointed with the networking results? Turn the tables around. Consider volunteering to help out at the job fair or other types of events. This puts you in a better strategic position for presenting your résumé or business card. Company representatives might view you differently, if they know you are willing to go the extra mile in helping them make their presence easier to manage. Get involved by visiting Eventme.com, TheLunchClub.net, Craigslist.com or view the calendar of events for JacobJavitsCenter.com to place yourself in opportunities for giving out your business card. Volunteering for events has been a very successful resource for my business partner and I to expanding our business. Zig Ziglar, one of the most successful sales trainers in the world says "if you help enough people get what they want in life, you will get what you want in life".

8. Use "In Your Face" follow up

Did you ever have a job interview or meeting with a recruiter, potential client or employer and wonder why they never called you back? 'Out of sight, out of mind' is the operative phrase to remember. Today's economic climate dictates you might be competing with 20, 50, 100 or more other people for the same position or contract. It's quite a task for people to keep track of each individual meeting. So it's up to you to give a person a reason to call you back. Immediately after a meeting snail mail a hand written note thanking the person for their time. Insert your business card. Now you're in the driver's seat in standing out from other people. If you get no response, do it again. Patience and persistence pays off.

9. Use promotions to promote YOU, Inc.

Newspapers often have stories of people being promoted to high levels in different organizations' This is an opportunity for you. Consider getting some invitation size blank greeting cards. Use the Internet's search capabilities to find out the address of the company's executive offices. Send the blank invitation type card with a hand written note sincerely congratulating a person on their promotion. Insert your business card. For the cost of a 37-cent stamp, you have just made someone's day and may create an impression that makes a person feel compelled to respond back to you. Make it a habit to do this once a week. Remember '6 Degrees of Separation'. You just never know . . . People open invitation type envelopes faster than any others.

10. Brand yourself with a slogan

Print a slogan on your business card that answers the question "Why should I hire you?" Or "What makes you different from everyone else?" A catchy phrase or slogan insures people ALWAYS associate a company name with their product or services. People remember even after the commercial is over. That's called branding. Companies pay big bucks to advertising agencies to come up with these lasting slogans. Consider doing the exact same thing on your business card. This is your insurance people remember you, after you meet. Don't just put Hortence Smiley, Accountant on your business card. Add something like "Financial Services With Integrity." A slogan makes all the difference between getting hired or not because people will remember you long after a meeting.



RECOMMENDED READINGS

How to Work a Room, RoAne, Susan, Collins, 2000

Make Your Contacts Count: Networking Know-How for Cash, Clients, and Career Success, Baber, Anne and Waymon, Lynne, American Management Association, 2001

Monster Careers: Networking, Taylor, Jeffrey and Hardy, Doug, Penguin, 2006

Never Eat Alone: and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time, Ferrazzi, Keith, Currency Doubleday, 2005

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Power Networking: 59 Secrets for Personal & Professional Success, Fisher, Donna, Bard Press, 2000

Rites of Passage at \$100,000 to \$1 Million+: Your Insider's Lifetime Guide to Executive Job-Changing and Faster Career Progress in the 21st Century, Lucht, John, Viceroy Press, 2000