

Networking for Success

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Preparing to enter the job market can be a scary thing. Wouldn't it be nice if you already had connections that could help you make the transition a little easier? This is where networking comes in handy.

Networking is about assessing and utilizing the resources in your personal and professional life to aide you in your search for a job, as well as help you build a career.

The primary purpose of networking is to create and foster professional relation-ships. It is not about using people, but rather finding connections that can help you in your job search. You have to re-member, however, that networking is a two-way street. Look for ways that you can also contribute to the relationship. This will make your networking most effective.

BENEFITS

The reasons for networking are numerous. Many job opportunities fly under the radar and are never posted. Instead they are snapped up by people with the right connections. By building a network, you have access to those connections.

Networking also allows you to receive advice, tips and strategies for entering your job market. Talking with people in your field will also open doors to insider information that you won't find on the company website. You can look to those who are currently hired for details on what the job environment is like, what is expected of employees, and what it will take to secure and succeed in the position you are applying for.

FINDING CONTACTS

When building your network, it's important to have a plan. Begin your net-working through people you know. It will help make the process less intimidating. Make a list of all your personal and professional contacts, and then analyze how you can benefit each other. Who do you know? Where do they work? What jobs have they had in the past?

Start with your immediate family and friends, then look to college professors, previous employers, clubs, or student organizations to which you belong. From there, you can move outward into friends of friends, social networking, and other associations and organizations. Taking it step-by-step makes the process less intimidating.

Volunteering and service learning projects are also a good way to build connections and find additional resources in your field that you might not necessarily find otherwise. You can also use these experiences in your resume.

Once you make this list of potential contacts, create a database or some other sort way to track them that will allow you to record who you've contacted and what you've learned from the experience. By keeping records, you can use that per son's name when you make your job contact (with their permission of course!) and also follow-up on any other references they give you. It's also polite to send a "Thank You" card to let them know you appreciate their time.

Here at Western Carolina, you can start building your network by talking with professors and mentors in your major and attending career fairs. Both of these re-sources can put you in touch with real employers and give you a head start in your job search. So, attend a career fair, call your advisor, or just stop by your department. People want to help you; you just have to ask.

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http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/Career_Services_CJ_December_08.pdf