

INTRODUCTION

The job market has changed. Our approach to finding work must change as well.

Years ago, people had one or two (maybe three) jobs in their lifetime. You were hired by a company and stayed there until retirement. Twenty years or more on the job was common.

Today, five years on the job is a very long time. Most people change jobs every two years. For self-employed persons, or consultants, most jobs now last a month or two. A three-month gig is a good one. Six months is great. A yearlong job is fantastic. More than a year is incredible.

The job market is always changing. Even though we are working now, we should expect that shortly we will be out of work, and on a Work Quest.

So, how do we go about finding those elusive jobs? They are out there. But, they are becoming increasingly difficult to find. Particularly if you are seeking direct placement on your own, versus using recruiters and temporary agencies who work on a commission basis.

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

Where the jobs are:

Internet Ads	
Newspaper Ads	20 to 25%
Recruiters	Collectively
Temporary Agencies	
Job Fairs	
Other (like company websites)	
Networking	75 to 80%

Where should you put your emphasis?

Cover all the bases, but concentrate on networking.

Let's dig a little deeper into networking.

WHAT IS NETWORKING

Networking is an organized approach to developing contacts that can help you find individuals who have the authority to hire you.

Previously, we heard networking presentations by Jane Duffy and Lois Bradley. I'm not going to repeat that information. But, I am going to expand upon that content, and concentrate more on the details of networking, and what makes it work.

Networking is a long-term activity. It takes time to build a network. But once you have established a network, and maintain it, you will likely always be employed.

We've learned from Jane and Lois that networking is about getting introductions to people. Such introductions can come from many sources: friends, family members, church attendance, school activities, associations, societies, or just about any time you meet someone.

Many of these networking contacts are casual. They are seldom the decision makers you need to uncover. But these contacts can guide you to the right person.

What we are really after is finding out what jobs exist (or can be created), where they are, and who has the authority to hire.

When we are networking, we are not just asking for leads. We are building long-term relationships.

We must win and build the confidence of others before we can expect them to jeopardize their reputation by recommending (referring) us to influential people they know. That takes time. Sometimes it is faster than you might expect.

At the end of the day, both the quality and quantity of referrals is important. But in this case, quality probably has a greater value.

GETTING READY FOR NETWORKING

Get organized.

Develop a game plan. Prepare a marketing plan, or program to follow. If you don't market yourself, who will?

Practice good time management. Set targets for calls, etc. Set and follow a daily schedule.

Prepare your marketing materials, to include:

1. An attractive business card.
2. A succinct Profile, Resume, and Cover Letter. Or several versions of them.
3. A list of Target Companies to contact.
4. A Contact List, or list of persons who know, including business acquaintances. This is a starting point for your networking.
5. Make contacts at networking groups. Start attending meetings.

Develop a 30 second and two-minute drill.

Because meetings are impromptu, you should always be ready with a well-rehearsed, quick overview of what you do. This is often referred to as the 30-second drill. Describe your skill set - what you offer an employer - in 30 seconds or less. A lengthier version might be a two-minute drill.

The 30-second drill should emphasize who you are, what you have accomplished, what you can do for a new employer, and what you want to do. The two-minute drill goes into more details about your accomplishments.

Use these quick introductions whenever you meet people who may give you referrals. You'll be surprised how often they will say to you "tell me more". Remember, your objective is to find enough referrals that lead you to the hiring manager or decision maker. These are the people who can hire you. Everyone else leads you to them.

Remember, many networking contacts are impromptu. Always be ready for them.

You know, there is an overtone to networking that is frequently ignored. Today, I would like to call attention to it.

How many are in sales? Actually, we are all in sales.

What are we selling? Our Skill set.

Who do we sell to? Everyone we meet (our persona), and networking contacts our skill set (as well).

What is the sale we ultimately want to make? Getting a job offer.

GETTING THE NETWORKING INTERVIEW

Once you have a referral name, the next objective is to get a networking interview. The purpose of the networking interview is to win the confidence of your contact so that he/she will recommend you to others within the organization. You must win the confidence of this individual before he/she will recommend you to others. Their own reputation is at stake.

Always ask your initial networking contact if you can use their name when you call those people they recommend. "John Smith suggested I call you . . ." is much better than "I'm Gregg Jones, and I'm looking for work".

When you are calling people, you are really trying to get them to tell you who the decision maker is, and hopefully, introduce you to that person. When you find the decision maker, you want to set an appointment with them.

One approach you might try is to handle the call as a referral, ask for help, and give your 30 second drill. Something like:

"Mr. Smith, Gregg Jones suggested I call you. He thought you might be able to help me in my job search. I am a 30-second drill. ..

Is there a time we could meet for 20 or 30 minutes? I would like to learn more about your company's (needs or activities), tell you more about my background and experience, and explore areas where my experience may fit the needs of your company. And, look for any areas where I may be of help to you.

Don't be afraid to say you are out of work. That's nothing to be embarrassed about. In fact, admitting that is very pro-active. Also, people respond very favorably when you ask for their help.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. That's the best way to find out what's going on.

Treat a networking interview the same as a job interview. Be prepared, well dressed, on time, and well rehearsed. That is, do your homework before going on the networking interview. Check their website. Find a few significant talking points. Typical points might be:

1. What trends do you see in your industry?
2. What trends do you see in your company?
3. What are the most pressing needs in your company?
4. Who can I talk to about my fulfilling those needs?

Keep exploring who is the decision maker. Who should I talk to? Can/will you give me an introduction. A phone call is better than an e-mail or letter. But the point is to get them to introduce you. At worst, get a name to contact, and an OK to use their name when calling for an appointment.

Do not leave a resume. A networking interview is not a job interview. It is a fact-finding session, and the opportunity to sell yourself to your referral who probably cannot hire you, regardless. Here, you are selling your persona and reviewing your accomplishments. And persuading him/her to give you referrals that will lead to the hiring manager.

Instead of a resume, leave a one-page Profile Sheet, or Executive Summary. This is like a one page resume. It should emphasize your skills and major accomplishments, and maybe a brief client list. This gives your contact an overview and quick reference of your capabilities, and rationale for introducing you to others.

CONDUCTING THE NETWORKING INTERVIEW

Ground rules for networking interviews:

1. Be prepared.
2. Be timely.
3. Leave your Profile, not your Resume.
4. Have your portfolio with you.
5. Make a list of (intelligent) questions to ask.
6. Make a list of points you want to cover (so you don't forget anything).
7. Ask for his/her help.
8. Ask how you can help him/her in their work/career.
9. Ask permission to follow-up with them. Determine how, and how often.

10. Do not extend your visit, beyond the 20 or 30 minutes asked for, unless you are invited to stay longer.
11. Remember, first impressions count.

The whole point of networking interviews is to find your way to the decision maker. You do this by developing good networking contacts, staying very professional during a networking interview, and selling yourself. This includes selling your persona, as well as showing how your skill set and experience can meet existing needs and solve problems of your prospect company.

Remember, the objective is to get yourself in front of the individual who can hire you. Then you are on a job interview, not a networking interview.

During the interview, concentrate on determining needs you may fulfill, not jobs currently available.

FOLLOW-UP IS CRITICAL

After the interview, send a personal, hand-written thank you note. At worst, send a typed letter snail mail. Consider e-mail only if given an e-mail address, and the person has agreed to accept e-mails. Tell the interviewer that you want to stay in contact with him/her. Ask him/her what method they prefer. Send your thank you note the same day. The next day, latest.

Schedule your next interview or networking session at the end of the current session.

Keep good records. The better your records, the better you can manage your network, analyze the results of your efforts, and improve your ROI.

Handle your job search, and networking, like a salesman handles his accounts.

Complete a "call report" for every call you make ... by phone or in person.

Include enough information to be analytical.

Compare the results of your efforts. What is successful what is not? Follow those techniques that seem to deliver the best results.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Let's take a minute to look at the life cycle of hiring. For companies, it goes something like this:

1. Determine the need. (No competition for you).
2. Develop job specifications. (No competition for you).
3. Develop candidate requirements. (No competition for you).
4. Look for candidates internally. (Some competition for you).
5. Review candidates who have contacted the company. (More competition).
6. Advertise the position. (Lots of competition).

7. Interview candidates.
8. Hire candidate desired.

The sooner you can get into this cycle, and in front of the hiring manager, the better off you are. The greater are your chances of being hired without the job being advertised.

The more time goes by before your contact with the hiring manager, the greater is the competition.

Networking can get you in front of the hiring manager, or in the system early on. Before the job goes public (and is most competitive).

Companies will tend to hire someone they know, or are familiar with, instead of going through the formal hiring process.

Companies will also make jobs available if they find they have a need, and a specific candidate is present who can fulfill that need.

IT'S ALL IN SALES

Follow the traits of successful salesmen:

1. Know your product (your skill set) well.
2. Keep up with the latest trends.
3. Use promotional material well (business card, profile, resume, e-mail signature line, website).
4. Have a game plan and stick to it. Commit to a specific number of hours, phone calls, interviews, and record keeping time each day.
5. Keep your Target Company List and your Prospect List current and accurate.
6. Sell yourself (your persona) to everyone you meet. Be friendly and likable.
7. Sell your skill set to every business contact you make (30 second/two-minute drill).
8. Overcome call reluctance. Make the calls, both phone and in person.
9. Ask for referrals from everyone you talk with.
10. Remember: It's a numbers game. You must make calls to succeed. If you make enough calls, the law of averages will take care of you.
11. Welcome rejection. Each turn-down brings you one step closer to a sale.
12. Keep a permanent record of:
 - a. Every call you make.
 - b. Every phone conversation you have.
 - c. Every networking interview you have
 - d. Every job interview you have.
 - e. Record the details immediately, including:
 - Mood, tone, comfort level, body language, etc. for both you and the interviewer.
 - Emphasize both the pros and cons of the interview. Be honest.
13. Perform and record follow-up activities.

14. Maintain good information about your prospects.
15. Stay in touch with your prospects.

Like any sales activity finding work opportunities is a numbers game. The more aggressively you seek work, the more likely you are to find it. If you wait for someone to call you, that may never happen.

The law of averages protects salespeople. It can also protect you in your job search. Simply stated, the law of averages suggests that the more calls you make the more likely you are to be successful.

Why do salespeople fail?

1. Not prepared.
2. Poor product knowledge (poor training).
3. Lack sales skills (poor training).
4. Poor presentation (in person and on paper).
5. Poor attitude. (A bad attitude is contagious).
6. Poor appearance.
7. Don't make the calls (40 knocks per day yields 1 lead per day, 5 leads per week, one sale per week, minimum).
8. Don't recognize opportunities that present themselves. Seize those opportunities.
9. Don't keep good records.
10. Don't follow up.
11. Lack persistence.

IMPROVING YOUR ROI

In business, Return on Investment (ROI) is a measure of financial success. In your job search, ROI equates to the relative success you have in getting appointments and jobs, compared to the time and effort you expend in the search (your investment).

The better (and more detailed) records you keep, the better you can analyze the results of your activities. The better your analysis, the greater is the opportunity to improve. The greater the improvement, the greater is your ROI

Detailed record keeping is the prerequisite for improving your ROI.

Consider this approach to record keeping:

1. Develop a list of details (potential variables) you want to track. (Start with those listed above, in "IT'S ALL INL SALES" item #12).
2. Rank the importance of each, with respect to contributing to success or failure. Weight each variable, if desired.
3. Determine how you will record and track your performance. Use software such as ACT, Excel, Outlook, etc.
4. Evaluate the outcome of each transaction. Try to determine potential causes of success and failure.
5. Compare successes and failures to previous efforts.

6. Determine what elements might be changed to produce better results.
7. Develop a program to change those items for the next interview.
8. Implement the changed (modified) program.
9. Evaluate the outcome.
10. Compare the results. Look for differences, pro and con.
11. Determine what new changes to make.
12. Implement those changes.
13. Evaluate the outcome.
14. Compare the results
15. Etc. Repeat the cycle as long as you think there is room for improvement.

As you repeat this cycle, always look for improved results from those changes made. The more refined and successful your approach becomes, the greater is the return on your investment of time and effort.

Remember the simple definition of insanity? It is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

Make cold calls (by phone and in person) to develop leads and contacts. You'll be surprised just how helpful some receptionists can be. Try to get names of key individuals, including those in Human Resources, purchasing, Project Managers, department heads, administrative managers, and executives. Contact them with your 30-second drill. Be creative in your approach receptionists, secretaries, and other gate-keepers.

Check newspapers for company articles and make contact based upon that article.

Check calendars of events in newspapers and attend group meetings, such as networking groups, associations, conventions, etc. Be creative in your approach. Network as much as you can. You never know where your next referral will come from.

Follow up these new leads to build your network.

Follow the rules for networking.

IN SUMMARY

Remember:

- 75-80% of all jobs are found through networking. They never get to the newspapers, recruiters, temporary agencies or the Internet.
- The more widely advertised the job, the greater is the competition. Get in there before the job gets publicized.
- Always be alert to fresh opportunities.

- Always network like a professional.
- Build your network for the long term.
- Looking for work is a full time job. It takes 40 hours per week to be successful.
- Keep good records. If you don't know where you are, you don't know where to go, or how to get there.
- Maintain your networking contacts. A good network will keep you employed.

POPULAR LOCAL NETWORKING GROUPS

PAPEN (Pennsylvania Professional Employment Network). Website: www.papen.us.

There are four PAPEN meeting locations, described below. Maps are available on the website.

PAPEN North: Meets Mondays, at 8:00 a.m., at the Hampton Presbyterian Church, 2942 East Hardies Road, Gibsonia, PA 15044. At Pennsylvania Turnpike and Route 8.

PAPEN South: Meets Fridays at 9:00 a.m., at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2040 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241.

PAPEN East: Meets Thursdays at 7:00 p.m., at the Beulah Presbyterian Church, 2550 McCrady Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.

PAPEN Westmoreland: Meets Wednesdays at 5:30 pm, at the Career Link (Business and Industry building), at Westmoreland County Community College, 300 East Hillis Street, Youngwood, PA, 15697.

PAPEN lifetime membership costs \$10.00. The PAPEN Directory (of members) costs \$10.00 per issue, published twice a year.

PRIORITY TWO: Website: www.papen.us. Meets every Monday at 5:00 pm (advanced group) and 6:00 pm (beginning group), at the Northway Christian Community Church, 12121 Perry Highway, Wexford, PA. Phone 724-935-0252.

AMONG FRIENDS: Website: eyecareforyou.org. Meets Thursdays at 10:00 am, in the first floor cafeteria of Foster Plaza Building #10 (Interstate Hotels Building, next to the Holiday Inn, Greentree).