



Articles of Interest

Networking

Did you know that approximately 85% of the job openings are never advertised? Most employers don't need to advertise - there are enough interview candidates referred to them from a trusted employee or colleague. A word-of-mouth referral dramatically increases your chances of being called in for an interview. Keep in mind that checking the classified ads should not be discontinued, but the greatest percentage of your time should be spent utilizing the most effective job search technique.

Networking is the most effective way of discovering the hidden job market. The purpose is to develop and use personal contacts in order to exchange information, ideas, and resources and to get feedback on your résumé, qualifications, and job search strategies. In the process, your goal is to inform as many people as possible that you are looking for a job and to let them know what type of job you want. At first, you may have some reservations about approaching people for help, but once you get started, you will be surprised at how willing most people are to offer assistance.

First, make a list of all the people you know. Include your extended family, business contacts, friends, acquaintances, previous employers and previous co-workers, etc. **If you do not want your current employer to know about your job search, do not network with your co-workers.** Contact the career centers of schools you attended; most offer their services to alumni and current students alike. Register at a Job Center - where services are provided free of charge regardless of your employment status - to receive job referrals and career counseling. Support groups are also helpful in providing encouragement, job leads, and information on companies.

Consider five to ten people you can use for a reference, and ask their permission to do so. Record each person's name, address, telephone number, and occupation. Let them know what kind of work you are looking for and give them a copy of your résumé. Typically, each time you apply for a job you will only be asked for two or three references, but you should use different people so no one person is bombarded by calls. Family members are not acceptable as references, and you should never use a person as a reference without his or her permission.

Contact the people on your list and inform them of your job search and describe your work qualifications and preferences. Send them a copy of your résumé so they will be better able to recommend you if they hear of a job opening. Line up one or two people to review your résumé and practice interviewing with them. Ask everyone to recommend you for an appropriate opening, and to notify you of any job opportunities. *Gain as much information as possible by asking questions such as:*

- How did you get your current job?
- When you hire someone, what do you look for?
- What training programs or classes do you think would help me?
- What mistakes did you make in your job search?
- What resources did you find particularly helpful in your last job search?
- Will you let me know if you hear of any opportunities that fit my qualifications?
- Who would you recommend for me to contact next?

You are guaranteed to receive conflicting advice, but don't let confusion prevent action. Consider the source; usually advice from people in your field is most relevant. Different employers look for different things in a résumé, interview and employee. Tactics that may work in one occupation may not work in another. For instance, if you are looking to land a competitive sales position, aggressiveness and persistence would probably pay off, but if you are seeking a counseling position, presenting a patient, understanding persona would be better. If in doubt, err on the conservative side and never do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Keep in touch with your contacts throughout your job search to update them on your progress. When you do find employment, inform your network. A formal thank-you note lets them know you appreciated their time. Remember to extend the same help to them in the future.