

## BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

The cliché “It’s not what you know, but who you know” is only partly correct in today’s employment market. A more accurate expression is “It’s not who you know, but who knows what you know.” Networking is both a process and a skill that can open doors to opportunities that might otherwise stay closed. Networking is building professional relationships with contacts, both business and personal.

### GOALS

1. Quality, not quantity
2. Make contacts and hear of companies that have one of the following:
  - a. A problem to be solved
  - b. Is expanding or winning new orders
  - c. Have unpublicized job openings

If you learn of a vacant or be position before a company advertises the position, you will more effectively compete for that job. Companies have created positions just to utilize a person’s talents.

### KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING

1. Must be able to communicate and interact with other people
2. Be prepared to talk to people both on the phone and in-person
3. Be confident, you may be talking to key decision makes
  - a. They are busy, so pick the right moment to approach them
  - b. Intrigue them quickly with conversation so they do not lost interest
4. Realize that you will face rejections, so keep your eyes on the prize
  - a. Be prepared with a polite response
5. Use it in conjunction with other traditional methods of job searching (Employment Fairs, Help Wanted Ads, Internet, etc.)

### STRATEGIES TO BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

1. Level One Contacts – Start with people you know
  - a. Family members, friends, professors
  - b. Discuss your qualifications and employment desires
  - c. Ask for connections to the field you are trying to enter
  - d. Try to collect at least three names from them
  - e. Leave a copy of your résumé
2. Level Two Contacts – The acquaintances of your Level One contacts
  - a. Essential piece in growing your personal network
  - b. Usually have a direct connection to the industry you are entering
  - c. Because you obtained their name from someone they know, they are more willing to talk to you
    - i. Approach from the standpoint of seeking advice rather than employment
    - ii. Make sure they know you received their information FROM one of their own contacts
      1. “Hello *Mr. Smith*, I am calling because *Aaron Mowen* told me to contact you.”
      2. “I would like a moment of your time to learn about how you broke into the field.”
  - d. Secure a brief meeting (maybe 15 minutes) to learn about them

- e. Once securing a meeting, discuss the following:
    - i. Learn about their career path
    - ii. Ask them for advice
    - iii. Ask for résumé advice
    - iv. Only discuss personal experiences if asked, use your 30-second pitch in this situation
  - f. At the end of the meeting:
    - i. Thank contact for their time
    - ii. Request names of some of their contacts, try to get at least three
    - iii. Send a thank you note
      - 1. Discuss something specific you learned from them
      - 2. If they gave you résumé advice, send a fresh copy with their changes
3. Level Three Contacts – The acquaintances of your Level Two contacts
- a. Follow the same process as Level Two
  - b. Additional Follow-up step:
    - i. Send a thank you letter to the Level Two contact who referred you
    - ii. This keeps your network alive

By following these networking steps, professionals from all over your industry of choice will begin talking about this up-and-coming star that is seeking advice from all of the top people. This strategy has been very effective in helping many people find employment. Good luck, and remember; you may not always be successful in setting up a meeting with some contacts. The more persistent you are, the more meetings you will have.