

Networking Is for Everyone

CHAPTER FIVE

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Networking is an important part of any job search and the source of many successful positions. This approach can help you in several ways:

- Members of a network obtain information about industry segments of interest and learn about the kinds of jobs available
- Each member generates and gathers ideas for brainstorming to help develop effective job-search strategies
- The networking process brings introductions to new people, who may then provide even more information, ideas, and introductions—expanding the process and the benefits.

Networking is a critical activity and it must be done actively, intelligently, and enthusiastically. If you think of your job search as a marketing exercise—selling your skills and abilities as a potential employee—then your network becomes the framework for your market development.

For targeting your job market, networking doesn't mean asking people to find you a job; it means engaging your network contacts to help you find a job through various communications and other strategies. In the end, *you* will identify and target the job and introduce yourself to an employer through personal meetings and your résumé. Occasionally, a network member may intervene directly with an employer for you, but this is not common.

Use your network to contact specific persons in the organization about the job and to give you an idea of corporate/institutional values. Ask positive, supportive network members if they'd be willing to speak up for you and serve as references. If so, give each a copy of your application and targeted résumé.

Building Your Network

Your network consists of everyone you know in the chemistry job marketplace plus everyone those people know, including:

- Colleagues you see regularly—supervisors, clients, professors, classmates, instrument vendors, service and repair people, neighbors, and relatives
- People you might see only occasionally, such as former classmates and colleagues, physicians, dentists, just to name a few.

Any of these individuals might have information or ideas you can use in your job search, but your professional contacts will normally be the most useful.

One approach for extending your network is to become active in professional associations. Link up with one or more that represent your fields of interest such



Networking is crucial to life-long career success.



Networking is regular communication between you and others for a specific purpose. Successful individuals have many overlapping networks in life—for work functions, hobbies, community activities, school, and others in addition to job searches.



Your network includes all the people you know, even if you interact only occasionally, and all the people they know.

as ACS, ASTM, AAAS, EAS, Pittcon, ENC, ASMS, and others (see page A-3). With ACS, for example, you can get involved by participating in some local section activities, then joining committees. You can also participate in Technical Divisions or submit a presentation/poster for an ACS regional or national meeting. Anything you can do to make yourself and your abilities visible will help in developing personal relationships and adding contacts to your network.

At meetings, you might talk to speakers after their presentations. Express interest in their work and ask for any suggestions in your job search. Have business cards to hand out as you meet and talk to people. In conversations, be prepared to tell people about your job search, your background, and your desired position. If you don't advertise yourself, no one else will.

Maintaining Your Network

Maintaining your network involves staying in touch for professional purposes. Helpful tips follow:

- Try using a card file, computer database, or electronic hand-held note pad to keep contact lists with addresses, phone numbers, and other useful information.
- Review your network records regularly to keep them current.
- Be sure to follow up on any leads suggested by your network members.
- Since networking is based on reciprocity, take every opportunity to assist others by referring people who have skills that a specific employer might find useful. Remember that someday you may call on them to return the favor.
- Keep your contacts informed about how your job search is progressing. Call them or send follow-up notes (handwritten or email to thank them for their time and willingness to help. If a job lead doesn't work out, go back and ask your contacts for the names of others who might help you to broaden your network and refine your job market targets.
- Reward others in your network by sharing job search techniques that have worked for you and job leads that you won't pursue.

Networking isn't just an occasional phone call—it is a vital element of professional life. To do your job search well, you need to multiply your visibility; networking is the only way to do that. By staying in touch with your network, and acknowledging each member regularly, and letting people know you take their job leads seriously, you can get a jump on the job market. There is abundant evidence that those who successfully rebound from job loss and make the best career transitions have an established network ready to help.