

Spend your energy on networking and do it right



By [Mark Wijsman](#)

17 Feb 2015

When you start exploring the job market, and set yourself up for your first or your next step, there are many ways you can differentiate yourself and get ahead to find the right job before anyone else knows about it.

Firstly, please realise that finding a job takes effort and hard work. If you are checking the job portals and have your CV resting at recruitment agencies, you are only doing the minimum amount of effort.

Get to know people from your industry

There are many benefits to networking and getting personally acquainted in your industry, and for job seekers this is quite crucially the most successful way to find a job (an estimated [80% of jobs are found through networking](#)). Communicating your personality is important, and finding a common with people from your industry provides you with a much greater advantage to securing your next opportunity.

Having a solid network is something you can work on from an early stage, and the efforts you put in there will have beneficial results. In this regard, I advice career seekers to spend their time contacting people who are one, two, maybe even five steps ahead of them. Getting advice from industry professionals is an easy way to find out what steps you have to take to get to the next stage of your career, and what efforts you need to make to get where they are. They have the ability to mentor you if the opportunity arises, and might connect you to a company or professional contact that can help you with your next step.

Many clients have taken on this advice, and are reaping the benefits at this stage. I've had a client who was able to shadow someone she contacted for advice, getting some invaluable amount of insight and skills from the process. Another client used LinkedIn to follow new companies, and secured his next job through pro-active engagements with his new built network.

Creating these opportunities is another step, and networking is not just something you just do. Join discussion groups, engage online and use social media to your advantage in getting in touch with professionals. I've seen many people building their professional network via Twitter or LinkedIn, just by interacting and engaging in subjects related to their industry. When contacting strangers, try not to use a 'needy' approach (don't ask for a job) and keep the advice you'd like short and simple. People like to be flattered, and some might be eager to teach you some valuable tricks and tips to get ahead. Once you've established a relationship, show particular interest in their work and at a later stage perhaps suggest something you can do for them.

Create your own network

If you have trouble finding a network, perhaps it's time to start waiting on networks to be made available for you and start your own. It's much easier than you think.

There is a great benefit in the support you can get from others and starting a group can apply to any industry. If you are currently working, find out who are involved in your industry and perhaps set up weekly or monthly lunch/breakfast/coffee meetings with others to get connected. You can perhaps suggest a subject to discuss, or share articles to read and broaden your know-how of the industry your work in. Alternatively, these can turn into brain storming sessions to come up with new solutions to common problems relating to your industry.

Realise that most people like the benefit of meeting new people, so creating and organising that space opens many doors to attract others. If you are studying, and have certain ambitions, get together with those who have similar interests or passions and see if, together, you can set up something new. Many entrepreneurs start off that way, and find a common interest through informal meetings and discussions to come up with their next idea.

Are your friends also graduating and looking for their next job? Set a meeting each week to get together and discuss your job search efforts, your CV's, practice interviews and get yourself ready for the job market! Finding common goals and supporting each other might motivate you and provide new ideas on how to get ahead in your career trajectory.

Want to share your knowledge online? Start a discussion group on LinkedIn or Facebook and invite those with similar interests. Finding people who can participate is quite easy these days, and together you can broaden your knowledge by exchanging ideas and articles relating to your industry.

So, what are you waiting for? Get ahead and start networking!

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