

Networking tips: maintain old contacts, establish new ones

By Diane E. Lewis, Globe Staff, 9/7/03

Never underestimate the power of schmoozing.

Specialists say the most valuable thing job seekers can do for their careers is maintain old contacts and establish new ones. Unfortunately, not everybody is aware of that. When Office Team, a staffing agency, polled 613 employed adults this year about networking, 37 percent said that not asking friends, acquaintances, or business associates for help with a job search was the biggest networking mistake they had made.

Job Hunting Resources:

- [Choosing a coach: how a career coach can steer you toward work](#)
- [Networking tips: maintain old contacts, establish new ones](#)

Networking is not difficult to learn, according to Kenneth Morse, managing director of the MIT Entrepreneurship Center. Morse has developed a series of steps that job seekers should take to prepare themselves for a social event. The steps are called "cocktail calculus."

Morse said the first rule is to do your homework before you arrive at an event. That means knowing whether key companies or guests, personal friends, or business associates will be there. It also means checking to see if friends or acquaintances know some of the attendees. Morse said networkers should also prepare a brief introductory speech and memorize it before the event. A good speech has important information about your goals and achievements.



Kenneth Morse, managing director of the MIT Entrepreneurship Center.

Choose a conservative dress or suit and stay away from the bar, said Morse. Socialize at the banquet table instead. Then, seek out a personal contact who has strong ties to the head of the firm or the business associate you'd like to meet. Networkers shouldn't shy away from asking personal contacts for an introduction. After that, give the brief introductory speech. Follow up with a business card. A few days later, send a letter indicating a desire to meet with the corporate official or business associate.

Brendan King, president of Waltham-based King & Bishop, a human resources firm, said attending professional associations in one's industry can also benefit job seekers. In May 2001, he established HR Roundtable for downsized human resource professionals. About 60 people attend the bimonthly meetings. To join, new members must be unemployed HR professionals

who are actively seeking work.

"Right now, people have connectivity through e-mail and the Internet," said King. "But there is something magical about getting together every two weeks and seeing other people like yourself and knowing that you are not alone. When you sit at home after a job loss, you feel abandoned. This way, people get together and they share their stories as well as job leads. When someone finds new work, we celebrate. At the same time, we're making new friends."

Founded in 1990, Wednesday is Networking Day is the oldest ongoing networking group for professionals in New England, according to Larry Elle, a WIND facilitator.

"Many networking groups do not have an educational component," said Elle. "WIND meetings have a speaker or an activity geared toward job-search training and skills building. We also created a list serve to help WIND members connect to each other, research companies, and share job leads."

The organization, which has 3,000 members, offers a database that lists potential leads at 4,000 companies. WIND also has buddy groups, smaller units designed to promote support for the unemployed. According to Elle, meetings attract 200 to 300 people.

Following is a list of other networking groups and opportunities:

- **ABCD LearningWorks Program:** Located in downtown Boston at 178 Tremont St., this program offered by Action for Boston Community Development provides basic skills training and counseling that helps low-income residents prepare for work. Call 617-357-600.
- **Association for Corporate Growth, Boston Chapter:** This professional organization offers forums that attract well-known business speakers. The association focuses on corporate growth, development, mergers and acquisitions, and venture capital. Call 617-218-3333 for information.
- **Career Place:** Located in Woburn, Career Place offers free, comprehensive employment and career services for all kinds of workers. It also offers group support meetings and networking opportunities. The center is chartered by the Metro North Regional Employment Board and managed by Middlesex Community College. Call 781-932-5500 or check the website at www.CareerPlaceJobs.com.
- **Exec-U-Net:** Holds regular networking events for unemployed business professionals and executives, usually on the third or fourth Tuesday of each month. Meetings are low-cost and usually held at Doubletree Guest Suites, in Waltham. For more information about meetings and the registration fee, call 1- 800-637-3126.
- **HR Roundtable:** Created to help unemployed human resource professionals network and provide support for one another during their job searches, the roundtable meets on two days a month, usually Mondays. Participants must be HR professionals who are actively seeking employment. Contact the group's founder, Brendan King, at 781-890-8824.
- **Jewish Vocational Services Refugee Employment Center:** Located at 105 Chauncy St., Boston, this center helps the city's new immigrants find work. Services range from career counseling to job-search support and training referrals.
- **Job Net Career Center:** This center is a one-stop site that offers a range of services to unemployed workers, including the disadvantaged. At the center's site at 1010 Massachusetts Ave., in Boston's South End, clients receive referrals for basic skills training as well as career assessments, résumé assistance, goal setting, and interviewing workshops.
This site also offers the program Dress for Success, which helps women transitioning from public assistance develop a business wardrobe as well as new work skills. Call 617-427-4855.

Job Net's main office at 210 South St., downtown Boston, offers a range of services for all types of laid-off employees and professionals. Services counseling, job-search skills workshops, a data bank of computerized job openings, and other assistance. Call 617-

338-0809.

- **Massachusetts Biotechnology Council:** Located in Cambridge, the council is composed of biotechnology companies but holds social events and special programs that offer networking opportunities. Further information is available at www.massbio.org.
- **Wednesday is Networking Day (WIND):** This organization attracts unemployed professionals and skilled workers from a variety of industries. Speakers are invited to meetings and forums are held on various topics relating to the job search. Access the various WIND meeting sites, dates, and times through the organization's website, www.windnetworking.com, or contact Larry Elle for information about WIND South in Foxborough or WIND West in Westborough. Elle can be reached at 617-325-4521. To contact WIND East in Cambridge, call Martin Pierce at 617-489-6611. Ten dollars is charged per meeting, and members pay a one-time \$5 registration fee.

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