

Networking

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NETWORKING - "It is not what you know, it is who you know". Networking skills are an essential career tool. People often associate networking with standing in a room full of strangers trying to make small talk, loathing every second, or kissing up to people they despise to get a job. Networking is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "To make connections among people or groups of a like kind." In actuality, networking encompasses a variety of activities and can be virtually painless. The following is designed to guide you through the networking process and to provide you with ideas to help you develop a professional network that will facilitate career growth.

Where do I Start?

- The first step is to **let EVERYONE know you are seeking employment!** Let people know what you are interested in, and ask if there is someone they know with whom you can speak to gain insight on the industry.
- Create a list of people you know, starting with the obvious choices including:

Career services professionals at Gateway Technical College

Instructors

Classmates, family and friends

Gateway Technical College alumni

Former employers and current co-workers

Parents of classmates and neighborhood friends

High school friends and teachers

Customers and co-workers from former jobs

People you know from your community and organizations to which you belong

Make a habit to work your job search into the casual conversations you hold every day

What do I do Next?

- Join organizations where you are attending school and in your home town geared toward your profession, and get involved.
- Follow up when someone offers to say in touch or wants to work with you after you graduate.
- Get a part-time job in your field and get to know the people around you in the process.

Making Contact

- Compose a brief "commercial" for yourself outlining who you are, including some details about yourself and your intentions. Write it down and memorize it, so when it comes time to use it you won't trip over your tongue trying to get the words out.
- Tailor your commercial for your audience and make sure you include how you came to contact them.
- Make sure you know what you want to say and express yourself clearly; be confident and friendly.
- Be sure to keep track of who you contacted, when you contacted them, and what occurred during your conversation. **Record-keeping is an important element of networking.**

Attitude

- **Be positive and enthusiastic!** If you take the plunge and attend an event at which you know no one, make an effort to mingle, be confident and have topics ready to discuss. Without telling them directly, make sure they become aware of the fact that you would be an excellent addition to any organization.

Maintaining Contact

- Maintaining contact is the most important aspect of networking. If you have been lucky enough to establish a relationship with a professional in your field of interest, make sure you continue to foster that relationship by:
- **Following up** - write thank you notes, send them articles that they may find useful and interesting, and help them in any way you can.
- Treat networking with the **same respect and attention you would any important friendship** and remember networking is a two-way street.

Be Proactive!

“The best time to network is when you already have a job”. Networking at its best is proactively building associations with people, so they will already be in place in case you need them in the future. Networking is building social infrastructure in the present, so that it is already in place, if and when you need it in the future. It is more difficult to build a network when you are out of a job and suddenly realize you need one. So go about your life each and everyday building relationship with the people you meet as each new person you meet makes your network larger. Networking is not an event, rather it is a frame of mind, a way of living in which you treat people with respect, kindness and genuine interest.

Turn Networking on its Head!

Most people associate networking with someone who needs a job now. What if you approached networking from the position of “I’m not asking for anything”? There is a concept called “paying it forward”. This means you give before you ever ask for anything in return. You give before you receive. It is harder to be the recipient of another’s giving if you have not given of yourself. Consider implementing this strategy into your networking efforts. Start volunteering or “chipping in” with activities you care a lot about in your community, school, or clubs and associations you belong. If you do this you will be building credits, your reputation as a “doer”, and as someone who is viewed as genuine and credible. Networking is really just “Career Karma” as you will reap whatever you sow. So start planting now.

Please Note: This document was created by Career and Employment Services (CES) at Gateway Technical College. It is intended to be a guide and may not be all-inclusive to meet your specific needs. Check out the CES website at www.gtc.edu/ces for additional resources or to make an appointment please call (800) 247-7122.