



## **NETWORKING IN A CAREER SEARCH**

**The following are networking tips used to train the candidate on The Mulling Corporation's Career Transition program to network effectively in their career search.**

Studies show that only 15% to 20% of job opportunities are either advertised in the newspaper or listed with employment agencies. The vast majority of positions are found by networking. It is also surprising to some people that many career opportunities are found three to four levels down in the network pyramid. Most people do not find positions through people they know directly, but through friends of friends. This fact is why you do not need to know a lot of people to start a network. A few friends can eventually lead you to enough contacts who will know of career opportunities. If you start with any number of people who each give you two names, you can immediately triple your network. Two more names from each of those people, and you have seven times your original number.

The ultimate purpose of networking is to get a face-to-face meeting with someone who has the power to hire you. There are two routes to reach that person. First, you can target companies you want to work for and identify the people who could hire you. Then, as you talk with your network contacts, seek referrals to the people on your target list. Alternatively, you can follow the network wherever it leads and hope it leads to someone who will hire you.

You should follow both routes, but you should always have a group of companies that are your primary targets. Pursue those targets until you are satisfied there is not an opportunity there for you. Then you can drop one target company and add another.

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Here is the underlying principle of networking:

If you don't know someone personally, you are more likely to obtain an appointment to see them if you have a referral from someone they know. Through a sequence of referrals you will get your qualifications in front of dozens of people very quickly, and eventually in front of hundreds.

Apart from targeting certain people and companies, where can you start your networking? Here are some suggestions:

1. Your family, friends and neighbors
2. People you have worked with, past and present
3. Customers, past and present
4. People who sold to you or your company
5. Church, synagogue or mosque
6. Parents of your children's friends
7. Trade groups: through meetings, conventions or directories
8. Alumni organizations: directories or placement offices
9. Other organizations you belong to
10. Politicians and other influential people in the community

The preferred approach is to ask for help, not a job. There's more on this in the section on telephoning, but consider that it is harder for most people to deny someone help than it is to say the company is not hiring. What sort of help are you asking for? Essentially, you are looking for introductions to companies who may have job openings and people who may know about them.

Some people become overly aggressive in networking, expecting everyone to cooperate merely because they ask. Pushing too hard for an appointment or for information will backfire on you. You may offend the very people you are trying to impress.

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## **THANK YOU EMAILS**

Be sure to follow networking meetings with a thank you letter within 24 hours. It should seem like common courtesy to you, but plenty of people fail to do it. Also, follow up later to let them know the results of your contacting the people they suggested. This accomplishes several things. First, it puts your name in front of them again, and they may have additional suggestions. Telling them you've followed through on their original suggestions also says you value their opinions.

## **DEALING WITH RECRUITERS**

There are several reasons recruiters do not measure up to expectations despite the fact some people do get jobs through this avenue. Once again there are the numbers. A well-known recruiter will receive 50 or more unsolicited resumés each day. Recruiters usually specialize in a small group of industries and/or functions. If you don't match up, they are not interested in you no matter how well qualified you are in your own field. Then each recruiter in the office can handle only so many assignments at one time. For a top level executive search person this number is about six, give or take a couple. There are also the fees to consider, roughly a third of your annual compensation. That is enough to deter many companies from using search firms.

Thus, we come back to expanding your network of contacts to generate numbers in your favor. Any time you buy something, a recommendation from a friend is likely to influence you favorably toward that product. Now that you are in a job search, you are both the **product** and the **salesperson**. A personal referral or recommendation will favorably sway potential employers. We strongly recommend you spend your time proportionately to the probability of success from the active and passive approaches. That means 80 to 85 percent of your time should be spent in active pursuits and 15 to 20 percent on passive means.

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## NETWORKING OVER THE TELEPHONE

Networking over the telephone is the key to securing appointments with people on your network list. It is necessary to know what to say in a short conversation. You should be able to complete your conversation within two to five minutes. After that you are infringing on the other person's time.

Following is a four step process we recommend:

- Step 1: Identify yourself and state the mutual friend's name.
- Step 2: Compliment the person you are calling.
- Step 3: State your career objective and a few words about your background.
- Step 4: Ask for a 15-20 minute appointment.

The following is a sample conversation you may want to follow when talking over the telephone to obtain an appointment. Prepare your own script similar to this and rehearse it several times before you start calling.

**Step 1:** "Hello David, this is John Doe. We have never met, but you and I have a mutual friend, Carl Jones.  
**Step 2:** Carl said you are well connected in the \_\_\_\_\_ industry (or in the community) and know a lot of people. **Step 3:** I am trying to locate a career opportunity in the area of Marketing. I have a marketing degree from Florida State with over ten years experience in this field. Most recently I was Marketing Director for the Widget Company. **Step 4:** I would like to come by to spend about 15-20 minutes with you to get some advice on my career search. Is there a time that would be convenient for you?"

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## **OVER-PROTECTIVE SECRETARIES**

Before you reach your networking target you will likely deal with the secretary. One of the responsibilities of most secretaries is to screen telephone calls for the executive. While a secretary may be doing her job by questioning the purpose of your call, it is of the utmost importance to be as courteous to the secretary as you are to the executive. Many callers have been sabotaged by secretaries who have introduced them to the executive as an abrupt, discourteous individual. If this happens, your only chance for a positive first impression has been eliminated. If the executive is expecting a discourteous person on the other end of the telephone, your chances of obtaining the important 15-20 minute appointment are greatly reduced.

Here are some possible detours the secretary may put in your path and some possible responses:

- Does he know you?  
No, but Carl Brown suggested I call.
- Can you tell me the purpose of your call?  
Yes, Mr. Brown suggested I contact him to request an appointment.
- Can someone else help you?  
Possibly, but Mr. Brown specifically suggested I speak with David, and I'd like to be able to tell Carl I did so.
- Are you looking for a job?  
Yes, but not with your company. Mr. Brown suggested David might provide me valuable career advice.

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