In the FIRST 1 Place...

INSIGHTS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Networking, the Art of Building Relationships

BY MARY SPEISER

Networking is never about asking for a job, or learning if an organization has an opening – it is about relationship building. As my boss would often say, networking is always non-invasive surgery. If the question asked can be answered with a yes or no, then it is a poorly positioned question. As an example, if one should call and say "I am looking for a position with your firm", it can be easily answered with "We are not currently hiring". Conversation concluded. If you describe your background and mention that you are seeking a new position, you leave the possibility that the individual may respond in one of two ways "Gee, your background sounds great, perhaps we can talk about potential opportunities here", or "Let me think of individuals I know who could connect you with others who can help to expand your network.

Focus on the quality, not quantity of your connections. You will get better results by making a few good connections than by burning through many contacts with no results. A strong professional network is based on relationships and it takes time to build a relationship.

Networking requires that we be gracious, respectful and approach the individual as a friend (or friend of a friend), not as someone who has an expectation that everyone has the time or inclination to be of assistance. We must also be conscious that our time frames are not the time frames of others. We live in a busy world with many demands on individuals and we must be respectful of that. When someone has been helpful or even has given us the courtesy of their time, we should thank them with a personal note and seek out what we can do for them to reciprocate their kindness. Etiquette matters!

A typical networking phone call might sound like this: "Good Morning Fred. Jane Doe suggested that you would be a great contact for me and I appreciate you taking my call. I respect the fact that you are a busy person, so I hope to have just a couple minutes of your time. (Wait for a response. If it is not a good time, ask to schedule a time). Jane suggested that I reach out to you and tap into your knowledge and expertise in the _____ field. I have been in the healthcare recruiting work for over __ years. Additionally, the past __ years I have been doing executive search at the Director, Vice President and C-Suite levels and have completed __ searches for over __ clients throughout the U.S. During this time, I have also completed contract search assignments for __, __, and __ (executive search firms). Recently, I made the decision to begin evaluating other opportunities in the executive search field, as well as corporate (healthcare) recruiting opportunities. It is my hope that you may be able to provide insight into these two areas. Any information or advice that you can share with me would be much appreciated. Also, if there is anyone that you can think of who could also give me their perspective, I would value your referral.

Be prepared to answer the obvious questions: Why are you looking? What is going on in your business? What salary level are you seeking? Would you relocate?

Every day you go to work is another day you're interacting with people. Depending on where you work, you might encounter executives, customers or colleagues who can be valuable contacts. They might serve as good resources if you need a mentor or for seeking advice and additional contacts. Networking is not always about finding new work; it is about establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships.

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Correction

In the July 2009 issue of Chicago Hospital News, on page 6 in the Healthcare Professionals in the News section, an incorrect photo of Timothy Wadman, new Vice President, Operations at Advocate Condell Medical Center, ran. This is the correct photo of Timothy Wadman.

Timothy Wadman

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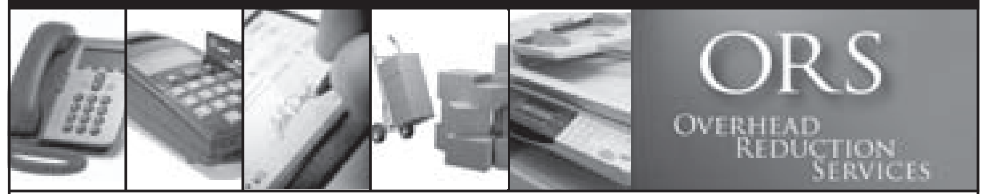

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