

Networking Re-Visited: To Build Your Career or Improve Your Ability to Find a New Position



BY RUSS JONES

Anyone who has been in a job search in the past few years understands the value of having a network of contacts. With more than 70% of new positions found through networking, it is obvious that the ability to create and maintain relationships is a skill worth honing.

For many, the prospect of networking while in a job search is a daunting task. Responding to ads, surfing the Internet and sending resumes to search firms and blindly to companies is an activity that has visible content. Letters and resumes are prepared and sent either via the mail or electronically, and the job seeker feels as though something is being accomplished. The overwhelming majority of this type of communication never receives a response and individuals are frustrated by the net results. Personal contact represents risk and many individuals resist networking because they fear rejection.

Unfortunately for many job seekers, the search process is about making contact with individuals and any time we make contact with another individual there is the risk of rejection. Because some job seekers avoid networking, they have accepted the risk of missing 70% of the open positions. Put another way, without this activity, they are pursuing only 30% of the possibilities that

are available to them.

To those of us who truly enjoy meeting and interacting with new contacts, the idea of expanding a personal contact base is fun and exciting – not to mention career enhancing. The basic premise is simple enough, though the waters are often murky because of personal agendas. Job seekers often feel that within an initial contact they must hit a home run – that is, get a job lead, interview, etc. The objective is simply to begin to develop a personal relationship with that person.

Recently, an individual came to me and described the brief conversation he had had with a person that I had suggested he contact. His conclusion was that the network contact was too busy to assist him. The errors made were obvious to me. This is what should have happened in the conversation.

Mike: "Good morning, Don, I am calling you at the suggestion of John Smith. Do you have a few minutes to talk?"

Don: "Sure, Mike. What can I do for you?"

Mike: "John was telling me that over the years, your career has been in the _____ industry. As I am currently exploring new career opportunities, John felt that your industry background, knowledge and

insights could be valuable. I was hoping to steal a few minutes of your time in the next few days to learn more about you."

This approach appeals to Don because he is not being asked to do anything but provide information. It is easy to use an example like this to see that we can achieve a face-to-face meeting and begin to develop a relationship by simply respecting individuals. Most individuals will share their time and knowledge.

Networking always has to be "non-invasive surgery." Asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no invites a conclusion to the conversation. Networkers need to:

- Listen attentively.
- Take notes – mental and written.
- Be gracious.
- Write thank-you notes (electronic thank you notes may be okay, but the traditional hand written note is almost always the best.)
- Follow-up and follow-through.
- Re-contact to thank individuals for their support and provide input relative to the information they provided.

Like any meeting, a networking meeting needs to have an agenda and an objective: Determine before the meeting what you want to accomplish – two new contacts is a good example of a meeting objective. Do not

ask for a job – networking is about expanding your personal contact universe, it is not an interview. There are occasions when the network meeting may become an interview, but it is not by design.

Networking is not an activity restricted to a job search; it is about something we should all be doing throughout our lives. Those who wait until they are in a job search find the activity to be difficult and the lengths of their searches are longer than those with extensive, developed networks.

Many networking calls start incorrectly by saying, "I am calling to network with you." Most individuals are willing to help, but we have to assist in leading their thought process and specifically by asking the right questions to get the information we need. When the search concludes, it is our responsibility to inform our network and maintain the relationship we have begun.

Russ Jones is a Partner at First Transitions, Inc., a corporate-sponsored career transition and executive coaching firm specializing in the healthcare field. He can be reached at (630) 571-3311, (312) 541-0294 or at rjones@firsttransitions.com. You can also visit the website at www.firsttransitions.com.



Visit www.MED3000.com to sign up for our Coding Newsletter



GROW REVENUES

"MED3000 lets our doctors focus on practicing medicine. They have defined our daily operations, improved our billing key indicators and enhanced our clinical and financial outcomes."

- Arnold DoRosario, M.D.
VP and Medical Director of PriMed



a 360° View on the Future of Healthcare

- Revenue Cycle Management
- ASP EHR & PM Solutions
- Patient Portals
- Data Warehouse Technology
- IPA Management