



careers advice pack

6. Networking and the 'hidden job market'



careers advice pack

Networking – easier than you think!

You are probably skilled in networking already without realising that you are. Have you ever found a plumber by asking around for a recommendation of someone reliable? Have you ever asked others at the school gates what they think of a local nursery or playgroup, or found a babysitter through a friend of a friend?

If you've done this, or anything like it, you have experience of networking. If you haven't yet, you can - it's not rocket science. The term 'networking' can put people off. What it really means is getting in touch with people. It's a simple and very effective way of finding out about:

- Different roles or careers
- Advice about how to break into a particular market / job area
- Referrals to people who can help you further
- Job opportunities - especially ones that aren't (yet) advertised
- A job
- Information about companies

The hidden job market

It can sometimes seem that there are not many jobs around. You look at job sites and can't see anything that fits what you're looking for. Or you apply for something that seems ideal and don't get an interview. Recruitment agencies sometimes have opportunities, sometimes not.

However, there **are** jobs out there and always **many more** than you can easily see. Networking is a vital way of uncovering this hidden job market.



careers advice pack

Have a think about the following features of the job market:

- To get offered a job you need to be noticed. When applying to job ads, that's hard, no matter how good your CV and covering letter are. For each job that's advertised there can be hundreds of CVs put forward.
- Many employers, especially medium-sized or smaller companies, prefer not to advertise. Advertising is expensive and time consuming for the employer, and they don't look forward to sorting through hundreds of CVs. Often employers would rather fill a vacancy with someone who comes to them directly or is recommended.

No surprise then that...

- 70-80% of jobs are not advertised
- Personal recommendation by a 'respected person' greatly increases your chances of receiving a job offer.
- It's an advantage to access the job before it is advertised - there will be less or even no competition!

Start to spread the word

Networking is your key to unlocking the hidden market of jobs, information and opportunities.

Get into the habit of talking to people about what you're looking for, starting with your friends and familiar contacts. Doing this will:

- Help you get used to saying what you want
- Give you a chance to develop your ideas



careers advice pack

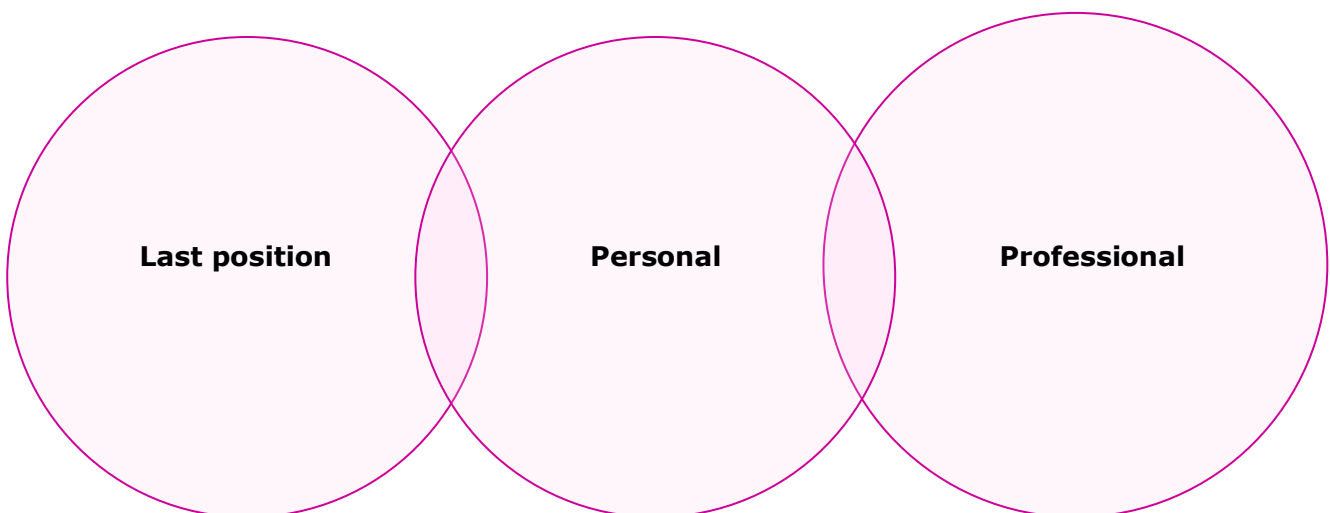
- Get feedback on your ideas
- Lead you to other people and resources

Once you're comfortable with talking to friends about the job you're looking for, you can begin to expand your networking group and gradually come into contact with new people. You don't have to phone up the Managing Director of your target organisation on day one and persuade him or her to give you a job!

Create a contact list

Start by listing the people you meet each day. Then think about other groups of people you know, and finally opportunities you have to meet new people.

These headings and circles, representing the different areas of your life, might help.





careers advice pack

Now make your list:

Previous job - work colleagues, former work colleagues or partner/children's work colleagues

Personal life - include your extended family/friends and friends of partner/acquaintances

Professional - organisations/associations/networks/LinkedIn groups

Tips for finding job opportunities

- **Do people in your current network know you're looking for a job?**
Make sure they do! Ask them to keep a lookout for you and let you know if they hear of anything.
- **Be clear about what you want**
Make it easy for people in your network to help you out - if they know exactly the sort of job you're looking for, they'll know to pass it your way.



careers advice pack

- **Network in the way that works for you**

Be creative - experiment with different ways of getting to know your network and growing your contacts. Then focus on what comes naturally and gets results for you.

- **Use social media if you can**

Social Media such as Facebook and LinkedIn (a social media site for professionals) are a great way of finding friends and colleagues you have lost touch with. You can also create new contacts by joining and contributing to groups. Additionally, many local communities now have online forums where you can find contacts and join in conversation threads to find out what is happening locally; there may be a local networking group you could join.

- **Look out for people you click with**

To some, networking sounds a bit 'grubby', but it doesn't have to be. It can be a lot of fun to build relationships with people you really click with, keeping an eye out for each other. This might happen at a book group, church, school association or elsewhere.

- **Be selective**

Make space for the people you really want to connect with. Leave out those people who drain your energy or always take and never, ever give.

- **Be surprised**

Networking can take time to bring results, but sooner or later you'll be surprised that you've received a call or email to let you know of an opportunity. Or a contact will bring an unexpected positive result!

'Closing down' an opportunity

When you hear about a job opportunity, or simply get close to a contact in a business which might have a job to offer, it's vital to make the most of it. Don't let the opportunity slip through your fingers!



careers advice pack

Here are a few important tips:

Value what you have to offer

It's easy to underestimate or overlook your unique talents and resources. What might seem obvious to you may be exactly what someone else is looking for. You may have skills and experience that you take for granted, such as being good on the telephone, or managing your time. Think carefully and ask supportive friends and family for some prompts - what do they notice you doing well?

Make sure you do yourself justice when you get to have that vital conversation with a contact for a potential job. Communicate clearly what you have to offer.

Aim to meet face-to-face

People trust people, before names, voices and emails. However you decide to do your job search, make it your aim to get yourself in front of the key potential employers where you can.

Ask for a discussion, not a job

Put yourself in the employer's/contact's shoes. They are probably busy and may feel pressured or uncomfortable if asked 'Do you have a job for me?'

Instead, make them feel valued for the knowledge they have and respect their time. Say something like "I would greatly appreciate the chance to hear your views on where opportunities may come up in the media industry in the next 6 months. Could we meet for 20 minutes to talk about this over a coffee? "

How to approach to a networking meeting

Before the meeting

- Work out the purpose of the meeting. How do you want them to help you?
- Know the questions you want answered and prepare how you will ask them.
- Confirm the time and location with the person you are meeting.



careers advice pack

During the meeting

- Give a brief summary of your career to date and what you want to achieve now.
- Get feedback about your plan.
- Ask prepared questions.
- Ask for two more names of people who they think could help you.
- Keep an eye on the time - brief is best.

After the meeting

- Follow up with a thank you email and/or letter.
- Keep the contact in touch with your progress and any successes.
- Have a note in your diary to regularly keep in touch and remind him/her of your existence (but don't overdo it).

Good luck. And remember – networking can be fun!