

## Networking and Self-Marketing

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Of all the tools you use in your job search—resume, cover letter, GPA, internships—your personal contacts will be the most important. Face-to-face contact often separates the person who gets the job from other applicants and can get you access to people who might not be responsive through other means. Throughout your job search you will meet many people and accumulate a lot of names and addresses. The more you build, nurture, and sustain these relationships, the more effective your job search will be.

Many of us have heard that the best jobs are never advertised and this is true. When hiring, most organizations look first at people they know and those who come recommended by the people they know. Firms report that 40 –50% are filled by candidates referred by employees.

Networking is a powerful way of building professional relationships. It is a process of actively fostering contacts and creating ways to disseminate information. This is why you need to learn to network.

### The Art of Networking:

1. *Target Your Search:* Before you start your job search process, do some research on the market. Choose at least two career targets that are realistic for your level of experience and qualifications. DO NOT communicate that you will accept “any job.” If you reach a dead end with a target, you can always broaden or reformulate your job search target.
2. *Look Everywhere:* Once you have job search targets, attend as many meetings, seminars, and events as possible in your chosen target areas. Choose class research projects in your chosen target areas. Look in the library and on the Web for magazines, journals, and databases with information, especially specific company and contact information in your chosen target areas.
3. *Talk to Everyone:* Tell everyone you know that you are looking for opportunities in your target areas. Faculty, GWSB MBA Alumni, alumni from your undergraduate institution, and fellow students are often good sources of job leads and industry information. They may not have direct knowledge of a target area, but know a colleague or acquaintance who does! Join student clubs and professional organizations in your target area and go to panels and lectures – both of which are often followed by receptions.
4. *Keep an e-Notebook:* It is easy to forget information that you received at the beginning of your program by the time you are ready to look for a job. Keep aside a job search e-notebook with all leads, contacts, and pertinent information on industries, companies, and general market trends. Write notes on the back of business cards you receive to remember what you discussed with that particular individual.
5. *Create Your Own Business Cards:* Create a card with your expected degree program and date of graduation. Please contact the MBA program office for information on business card vendors; Kinko’s has the current GWU logo and can produce professional business cards. When using business cards remember to:

- Carry your business card with you everywhere. Think of it as a substitute resume. You never know when you're going to meet someone who knows about an available position.
  - Mind your manners. Don't pass cards out during meals or corner someone to talk business at a purely social function. Ask permission to send a card and resume to the person's place of work. And if you meet some you'd like to give your card to, ask for several of theirs explaining that you can refer others to them and they will likely ask for your card in return.
6. *Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up:* The key to a successful job search is persistence. Try to keep in touch with contacts you have met during your graduate education. Send your resume with a friendly note and a case study you may have presented on a company in their industry. Situations change and jobs may open up within their organization or they may hear of an opportunity through a colleague. Even if you are not selected for a position, another opportunity may open up within that organization.

### **How To Work a Room:**

For many people, the above steps are the easy part—research, carrying cards, keeping notes on contacts—but find the face-to-face situations at networking events and parties to be uncomfortable and flagrantly self-promotional. Here are some tips to help you feel more at ease when mingling with large groups.

- Feeling uncomfortable is natural. According to research, 88% of us feel shy at some point. The choice is to “network or not work.” Instead of thinking of the people at the party as strangers, consider everyone's common interests and it will make you more comfortable.
- The top two icebreakers are “hi” and “hello.” (Accompanied by a firm handshake—avoid the squeeze.) Small talk about subjects you have in common is not shallow and can lead to more meaningful conversation. It's better to state the obvious than to stay silent and miss an opportunity.
- Have 3-5 topics prepared to discuss; anything from the national news to industry gossip to something interesting you've recently done. Be sure to read the newspaper and your industry trade journal before attending an event.
- Make sure you Observe, Ask, and Reveal (OAR). Observing only is a monologue. Asking only is an interrogation. Revealing only is self-absorbed. To keep things going, ask open-ended questions starting with how or what rather than questions, which may elicit yes or no answers only.
- Don't wait for a proper introduction. Prepare a 7-9 second rehearsed self-introduction and test it out on 3 people—be creative when writing it. Include the benefits of what you bring to the table, as well as your name, program or job title, etc. and lean in, slightly, with a handshake.
- Business events are for meeting lots of people so don't stick to one person. When ready to move on, summarize the conversation, lean away a bit, say something about looking forward to seeing them again, smile, and walk at least a quarter of the room away.
- Arrive no more than 15 minutes after the event's start time. This prevents a problem of having to “barge in” on large groups. If you do arrive late, greet the host/hostess, scan the room for an animated group of 3-5 people (two people may be engaged in an intimate or important conversation), stand on the periphery with open body language, and when someone invites you (words, eye contact, facial expression) introduce yourself or ask a question or make a comment relating to the conversation.

### **Do's and Don'ts When Meeting with Contacts:**

- DO offer any information, help and insight you can in return when meeting with a contact. Networking should be mutually beneficial whenever possible.
- DON'T go through the motions of contacting others. It is not enough to just meet someone and conduct a 15-minute interview. No matter who you approach, how you present your purpose will make the difference between a satisfying or unsatisfying experience. Come prepared.
- DO thank the contact and make plans to meet again. Keep the contact aware of your future career moves and ask about their plans. This process of nurturing contacts will sustain and enhance your career.
- DO ask questions and draw information. Get feedback on your job-search plan, objectives and resume. Do ask for advice, particularly if the person mentions obstacles you might face in reaching your career goals. If the contact can't help you, ask for the name of someone who can.
- DON'T hesitate to contact others for fear of imposing or asking for help. Most people are happy to do something for someone else if asked. The mistake most people make is not preparing sufficiently for each meeting.

### **The MBA Self Marketing Profile:**

A self marketing profile encapsulates who you are and what you have to offer the job market and can be used in a variety of situations. A more detailed version of this profile is called an Individual Marketing Plan. Please refer to the separate handout on Individual Marketing Plans for more information on this subject. A self-marketing profile should include:

1. Your skills: Choose one or two skills which are most marketable in your chosen field. Choose skills from the six categories of executive skills: technical, analytical, organizational, communication, interpersonal, and leadership. Always be prepared to illustrate how you used your skills with stories from your work or academic experience.
2. Your knowledge: You can have knowledge of an industry (banking), academic subject (Finance), region or culture (Japan), or organization/type of organization (military, World Bank, IBM). Your knowledge can come from professional, academic, or personal experience/background. For example, someone who worked in a family business during their formative years has knowledge of small business environments; someone who is an accomplished athlete may have knowledge of a particular sport (resulting in opportunities in sports management, equipment, events, etc.).
3. Your experience: It is best to quantify experience in terms of years, whenever possible. Experience can be professional, volunteer, internship, or entrepreneurial. For example, working for several companies in sales may be represented as "five years of progressively responsible positions in marketing/sales".
4. Your personal qualities: "Show me, don't tell me" is the guideline for discussing qualities. Always illustrate claims with examples from your experience such as "I am especially innovative as evidenced by my approach to solving systems problems at xyz company"

## The Sixty Second Sell: How To Use Your Profile:

### 1. *On a Resume*

For career changers: Use a Skills Gained line under your title to highlight transferrable skills  
Skills gained: Internal and external client management, project management, database management

For experienced professionals: Use a Summary of Qualifications at the top of the page

- Excellent computer/technical skills (skills)
- Knowledge of E. Asian culture and business practices (knowledge)
- Two years as an independent consultant in international marketing experience (experience)
- Especially resourceful as evidenced by innovative fundraising proposals (qualities)

### 2. *In a Cover Letter*

As you can see by my resume, I have an extensive background in sales and marketing (experience), excellent interpersonal skills (skills), and knowledge of the computer industry (knowledge) from my six years of experience as a business consultant at IBM.

### 3. *At a Career Fair*

It is a pleasure to meet you. I am particularly interested in the cosmetics industry and your firm is a recognized leader. I have an extensive background (experience) in retail sales and an MBA from The George Washington University School of Business, where I specialized in international marketing (knowledge). I am very entrepreneurial, as evidenced by my success as an independent consultant (qualities). I am also knowledgeable about Latin American business practices (knowledge) and speak Spanish (skills). Are there opportunities in your firm for someone with my qualifications?

### 4. *On a Voice Mail*

Hello Ms. Jones, I was given your name by Dr. X, a faculty member at The George Washington University School of Business. I expect to graduate with an MBA in Information Systems and Finance in May. I have recently completed a short-term assignment with an international investment firm (experience), where I gained valuable knowledge of the Asian market and investment strategies (knowledge). I also have a background in accounting (experience) and excellent computer skills (skills). I would like to meet with you and discuss ways I could be of services to your organization...