

NETWORKING 101

JOB SEARCH KICKSTART:

Networking 101: Finding The Hidden Job Market

It's called the hidden job market.

The **hidden job market** is a term used to describe jobs that aren't advertised or posted online. Employers might not post jobs for a number of reasons. Often, employers prefer getting candidates through employee referrals. They may not want to deal with the hassle of a public search or have learned through experience that the best employees come through referral.

Statistics bear this out.

- Current estimates indicate that about 70% of new jobs are never listed but are filled internally or by word of mouth. These jobs are never advertised and are not listed on job boards.
- Referred applicants are five times more likely than average to be hired, and 15 times more likely to be hired than an applicant from a job board, according to a 2017 study by Jobvite. Referred applicants are simply applicants who have been suggested by a current employee or close contact of the employer or hiring manager.

The only way to find this hidden job market is through - you guessed it - **networking**.

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Follow these 10 Steps to Network Your Way into a Job

1. Make a list of everyone you know. The reality is that you know more people than you think. Use your email contacts list, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc, etc... and make a list of everyone you know.

Write them down. Seriously. You can use an old school notepad or create an Excel spreadsheet. Think about people you know from former jobs, high school and college, or your neighborhood. Also think about people you've met through your close connections: your brother's co-worker; your college roommate's boss; your co-worker's spouse, friends of your parents and aunts and uncles. Include acquaintances from any clubs or organizations you belong to, such as the PTO at your child's school or your running club. Don't forget to include people like your doctor, accountant, and the guy you know at the post office.

Make a GIANT list and add contact info- a phone number, email address, or LinkedIn or Facebook connection.

2. Figure out what job you want before you start networking. Don't waste time applying for jobs that aren't a good fit for you. You'll be much more successful when you have specific career goals and can tell your contacts "This is what I'm looking for." It can be tempting to leave things wide open - but that leaves your contacts guessing at what kind of jobs to be on the lookout for and usually produces little results.

Spend some time dreaming and outline what your ideal job would look like - including job title, responsibilities and company environment and culture. Use the [Career Questions Worksheet](#) included in the [Job Search Kickstart](#) to help nail down the kind of job you desire. Be honest with yourself about those things you don't want to do vs. those things that give you energy and that you want to do more of.

3. Create a list of companies that fit your criteria and that you would like to work for.

Research these companies and work to find contacts within them. Ask everyone you know if

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they know anyone who works for those companies or organizations and then ask for an introduction. Use sites like Linked In and Glass Door to find potential companies and connections.

This is particularly helpful if you would prefer to remain in the same city or geographical area. Spend some time researching the companies in your field within commuting distance.

4. Start with your references and targeted contacts. Highlight those people on your list who have connections to your industry and companies you would like to work for. Contact them and let them know about your job search and your career goals and ask for their assistance.

Take the time to make these connections personal and long-lasting. Ask if you can meet for an in-person or a virtual coffee to catch up. Focus on building a long term relationship so that your network becomes stronger over time and will be there when you need it. Make sure to send thank you notes and keep them posted on your progress.

If your job search is not public, i.e. you are still employed and don't want your current employer to know you are job searching, you can still make these connections; however, it's important to choose your connections carefully and emphasize the confidential nature of your job search.

Make it a goal to contact everyone on your networking list over the next several weeks. You can set a goal to contact one a day or 10 a week.

5. Ask for advice, not a job. Don't put your contacts in the awkward position of having to turn you down. Take some time to catch up, if they're an old friend. Fill them in on your career goals and targeted positions and ask for advice in making connections or finding job possibilities. If the connection is a person you don't know well, respect their time and keep your conversations brief and to the point.

6. Use social media. Most of us have a love/hate relationship with social media. I hear it all the time. *"It creates drama and inflames conflict."* *"People aren't "real" on social media."* Etc.

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However, social media can be helpful in the job search if you use it in a professional way. If your job search is public, let your social media contacts know you are looking for a new job. If your job search is less public (i.e. you are still employed and don't want your employer to know you are looking for a new job), you can still increase your presence on social media and use it to make and strengthen connections.

Social media can actually work - because you never know who is paying attention.

Just a couple of years ago, while perusing Facebook, I noticed a friend who had posted that she was looking for a job teaching piano. The next day, another friend, who owned a music studio, was lamenting on Facebook that one of his piano teachers was resigning to do other things and that he desperately needed a new piano teacher. These two people were not connected to each other on Facebook or IRL (In Real Life, for those who need to know). I sent a message to them both, connected them, and bam! My friend the piano teacher was hired within the week by my friend the music studio owner. You never know.

7. Optimize Linked In. Yes. I've said it several times but if you are searching for a job, you need to be on LinkedIn with a fully completed professional profile and pic. Recruiters love LinkedIn but you can also use it to make connections with others in your industry.

Join LinkedIn groups for your interests and industry. Joining groups on Linked In makes you more visible to recruiters and helps you add contacts. If you find a job opening you like, try to find a connection within that company and contact them along with your online application. Ask for a referral through that contact.

LinkedIn has become more challenging to use as it has grown to mammoth size, however, it's still important to make yourself visible on the site. Think of it as being in the phone book - you absolutely need a professional presence there.

Follow the guidelines in the [LinkedIn Tips and Tricks](#) in the [Job Search Kickstart](#) to complete your LinkedIn profile.

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8. Join professional associations and organizations. Go to the meetings and conferences if possible. This is authentic networking at its best. You learn more about your industry plus you make connections with people doing the job you want to be doing. This also helps with resume building. You can add these memberships to your resume which increases your professional standing and helps recruiters see that you are invested and involved in your profession.

These conferences can be particularly helpful if you are young or new to your field. Join a professional organization and get involved. Volunteer to help set up for the meetings. Join a committee. It is one of the BEST ways to make professional contacts.

NOTE: Even during the pandemic, you can still connect with organizations. Many associations are moving their conferences online, often for no cost, making it less expensive to get connected.

9. Make connecting a habit. Call your contacts and take them to lunch. Have a virtual coffee together. Use Facebook, Linked In or other social media to touch base and keep people updated. Set a goal to make 5 new contacts a week - or one a day. Make phone calls, send e-mails. Even after you land your dream job, keep the connection habit. You never know when you're going to need it again. And that leads us to the last point...

10. Find ways to help others. Successful networking is a two-way street. That means giving as well as receiving. Send a thank-you note, ask about their family, email an article you think they might be interested in, and check in periodically to see how they're doing. Help others along in their job search through your network. You are creating a professional network but it is also your community - a strong network of people who can support each other and share advice, connections and ideas. Make it authentic.

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