

16. An Introduction to Networking

JUST THE FACTS: The purpose of this activity is to introduce participants to the process of networking and to help them begin to understand its relevance to the career development process.



Time

20 minutes



Materials

- Chart paper or white board and markers



Directions

Ask participants the following question: “How do people find jobs?” [List responses]. If the following were not discussed, consider including some or all of them on the list: personal contacts, secondary or post-secondary career centers, employer websites, Craigslist, Internet job sites (such as monster.com, snagajob.com, simplyhired.com or indeed.com), One-Stop Career Centers, walk-ins, professional or trade associations.

Ask: “Did you know that approximately 80% of jobs today are NOT advertised?”

Discuss: “If employers are not advertising, how are people finding jobs?”

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Talking to or contacting people you know to find job leads is the most effective way to find a job.
- Most of us find a job through personal contacts—people we already know such as our friends and family, doctor, dentist, and people we meet when we go shopping and during our normal everyday lives. Personal contacts are also the people that our friends and family know.
- Approximately 60% of job hunters find their new job with the help of friends, family members, and acquaintances.

Break the group into smaller groups of three or four. Considering the fact that people most often find jobs by interacting with other people, ask each group to spend five minutes developing a list of five strategies they might use when looking for a job (who could they talk to, what could they say, etc.). Strategies should be geared to creating as many ways as possible to tell others you are looking for a job.



Conclusion

Ask for a representative from each group to list the strategies they developed. Inform participants that what they just accomplished is called (traditional) Professional Networking. Learning how to network takes time and commitment. It means seeking out people you know, people who can offer advice, as well as potential friends, and building on these relationships. Networking is finding ways to “get known” by other who can help you in your job search. It is an “active” process for developing new relationships and new opportunities.



Journaling Activity

There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what just happened. A networker is someone who makes things happen. Think about a possible career goal you have. What is it? What can you do to develop your networking skills to get more information about this career?



Extension Activity

Discuss the concept of the informational interview. Informational interviewing is a networking activity important to the career development and career exploration process. An informational interview is an interview with a person who is doing the kind of work in which you are interested. It is an excellent technique to use when you want to: explore different career options; learn more about certain occupations; and/or begin to network with people who can help you in your job search. Although it is an effective job search tool, it's very important to remember that the primary purpose of an informational interview is to obtain information, not a job.

Help participants arrange for an informational interview (either on or off site). Prep participants on the types of questions to ask (i.e., what is important to them), the importance of asking for a business card, and what to do after the interview.

Question examples:

- How did you decide on this field of work?
- How did you get into this field of work?
- What do you like best about your work?
- What do you like the least?
- What is a typical day or week like for someone in your occupation?
- What kind of skills, education, and/or training would I need to get into this area?
- What personal qualities are necessary for someone in this occupation?
- What is a typical entry-level salary? (Do NOT ask how much the person you are interviewing earns!)
- Do you know someone else doing this kind of work that I could talk to for my research?