

Ask the Career Coach: Networking, Feedback and Follow up

You've been networking with some success, but now you need to follow up.

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I have been networking and have gotten some great leads but the follow up is challenging. I am trying to figure out how much to push without appearing like a pest. How do you follow up appropriately after being referred?

SM
Short Hills

Networking is a great way to connect for opportunities in this market. The challenging part is when you speak with people within your network; you need to determine if this individual is committed to making the connections referenced during your meeting.

Many people will reference knowledge about a company or know an individual that may be able to help. It is your job to ask them directly if they are comfortable making an introduction for you. If they say yes, ask them for the individual's contact information so you may follow up directly. Ask permission to use their name when making contact. This will encourage your network contact to tap their colleague, friend or family member soon as you will be following up. Most people understand the importance of making introductions, especially if they had been in transition or sought a new opportunity.

The key is to make it easy for your contact to refer you. Provide your contact with a concise summary, include what you have accomplished and what value you bring and why you are interested in the company. Along with your resume, it allows your contact to just add a few sentences of introduction and recommendation to be sent in an email. Hopefully, this facilitates getting you in the hands of the hiring manager or recruiter.

When a company advertises a position, the volume of responses is typically huge with many unqualified applicants that need to be filtered. Receiving a referral is invaluable for the hiring manager or recruiter because it saves them the time of filtering through all of the resumes. Some companies have referral programs where the individual that refers may get some benefit if you are hired.

Following up can be tricky. Once you have connected with the company it is in your best interest to keep your network contact informed of your activity. This may help facilitate any discussions that may occur behind the scenes between the company and your contact. It can also help resolve awkward situations when feedback is warranted. Who delivers it can make all the difference.

Taking in feedback is important as there are times when you believe the situation is about you when sometimes it is all about patience with changes occurring within the company itself. When the feedback relates to yourself, ask some polite questions that allows the individual providing feedback to provide you with constructive input. Even if you do not agree with the individual's input, listening and not being defensive is your best strategy to keeping this person in your network for future networking. There are times when we are not ready to receive feedback. So take notes and look at it a later time when able to absorb it.

About this column: "Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com. Lisa Chenofsky Singer is a Millburn-Short Hills resident and the founder of Chenofsky Singer & Associates LLC. She offers Executive and Career Management Coaching and Human Resources Consulting, writes and speaks on job search and career-related topics. Her web site is www.ChenofskySinger.com.