

# Create a Personal Networking Plan

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Creating a structured plan and process is vital to any successful venture, whether launching a new business, orchestrating an organizational turnaround or managing your job search networking campaign. It is critical that you clearly identify your network contacts, develop a personalized networking plan and build an administrative process to manage it all.

Before starting to create a two-tiered networking system, remember the most important concept underlying the networking process:

Ask your network contacts for their help, **not for a job**. People are delighted to help, but few will have jobs to offer you.

## **Tier-One Contacts**

These are the hottest prospects and people you know best, such as:

- Other executives and senior managers
- Current and past colleagues and managers
- Vendors
- Consultants
- Recruiters with whom you have an established relationship
- Bankers
- Venture capitalists

## **Process**

Your initial contact will likely be via phone with a quick call announcing you're in the job market and would appreciate advice, assistance, recommendations or referrals.

## **Follow-Up One**

At the end of each conversation, tell your contacts you'd like to send them a resume to have on file and ask if they prefer mail, fax or e-mail. Immediately forward your resume with a brief, friendly cover letter, thanking them for any help they can offer and mentioning the positions and industries in which you are interested.

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## **Follow-Up Two**

If you have not heard back from contacts within three weeks, call and inquire if they've reviewed your resume and if they have any recommendations.

## **Tier-Two Contacts**

These are people you know casually. This list will largely fall into the same categories as the tier-one contacts, but you do not know these individuals as well.

They may include:

- Commercial Realtors and developers
- Local newspaper publishers
- Attorneys
- Accountants
- Investors
- Chamber of Commerce Directors

## **Process**

Your initial contact will most likely be 50 percent by phone and 50 percent by mail or e-mail, depending on how comfortable you are in these relationships and how easy it is to connect with each individual.

Whenever possible, it's best if the initial contact is a phone call, allowing you to establish a more personal relationship. However, if that's not possible, mail or e-mail is fine. Your conversation will be more formal than with your tier-one contacts, but your objective is the same; to quickly communicate that you're in the job market and would appreciate their help.

## **Follow-Up One**

If you've called a contact, follow up immediately by sending a resume. If you've mailed or emailed a contact, include your resume. Also forward a cover letter including the positions and industries in which you are interested and several of your most notable achievements.

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### **Follow-Up Two**

If you have not heard back from contacts within three weeks, call or email them and inquire if they've reviewed your resume and if they have any recommendations.

### **Managing the Process**

Once you've developed your list of contacts and determined how to connect with each individual, set up a paperwork system to track all your calls, contacts and follow-up commitments. Referred to as your networking management system, it can be PC-based, on paper or a combination of both.

Here's a tried-and-true, if not old school, method:

- Create a 3-inch by 5-inch index card for each contact, noting how the contact was made, what information you provided, any follow-up commitments you've scheduled and the person's complete contact information.
- If you hear back from a specific contact, set up a page in your active-lead three-ring binder where you record all communications, referrals and actions related to that contact.
- Obviously, this system can easily be adapted for your PC using Access or any contact management system.

Be forewarned!

No matter how sharp your memory, if you do not keep track of your networking campaign, you will get lost in the process, forget important commitments and potentially lose great opportunities!

**(End)**