

Networking Strategies

NETWORKING is about who you know. Connecting socially and professionally has become increasingly important in a global economy. What was once a simple process of connecting with people has become more complex because of the Internet. It is still about maintaining friendships and business relationships, but it now requires a variety of strategies for success.



Objective:



Develop beneficial networking strategies.

Key Terms:



networking
proactive
referring
resource

Beneficial Networking Strategies

The definition of networking has changed over time. Networking involves connecting with and having access to others. The application to people and technology has broadened. Definitions may vary, depending on the application. Now **networking** is staying connected with a collection of people for the purpose of helping one another. It can encompass immediate and extended connection in person and online.

TABLE 1. The Definition of Networking Has Been Expanding

Dictionary	People	Technology
Dictionary.com noun, origins dating back to 1935 to 1940	"A supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest"	"The establishment or use of a computer network"
Merriam-Webster noun, origins dating back to 1967	"The exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions: specifically the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business"	"The establishment or use of a computer network"
BusinessDictionary.com	"Creating a group of acquaintances and associates and keeping it active through regular communication for mutual benefit; networking is based on the question: "How can I help?" and not "What can I get?"	Technology has made it possible for people to network online as well as in person.

The immediate network is comprised of people whom we know or have personally met and whom we can contact by phone, mail, or email (e.g., family, friends, coworkers, and fellow students). For example, your dad calls a friend to help him install a new computer program. The friend is willing to assist without a fee, but there could be a charge for the service. Either way, it is considered networking.

An extended network is made up of people known by those in the immediate network. The immediate network acts as a bridge to meeting new people and expanding the network. This opens to limitless possible connections of people knowing other people. An example could be résumé writing. John asks Jeff, a former coworker, to look at his résumé and provide feedback. Jeff is not comfortable doing it, so he suggests contacting Janice because she is a professional résumé writer that Jeff knows. Jeff's suggestion to contact Janice is called **referring**, which is directing an acquaintance who needs something to a person or place with the ability to help meet that need.

BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

Whether you receive help from people in your network or offer assistance, there are multiple benefits from accessing one's network.

Access to a Resource

A **resource** is something you may need, such as a supply, a product, a service, or some type of assistance. Gaining new information about a resource can make life a lot easier. A

resource can be acquired by yourself or from someone you may know. For instance, when Jose tells Mario to check Indeed.com for a job, Mario learns a new Web address for job openings. Jose becomes a human resource for providing the information, and the site becomes a technology resource for Mario to use in the future.

Access to Knowledge and Talent

Knowledge is specialized information, and talent is the unique ability held by others. When you talk to someone about a subject you do not know about and he or she provides you with new information, you gain from the knowledge. For example, you purchased an Android or iPhone and need to learn how to use it. When you attend a lesson that the store provides, you are accessing knowledge. You are also gaining from the instructor as he or she has a unique talent to instruct.

Finding Jobs

Networking is used for job searching. It is all about connecting with others; you can talk with them or connect electronically. When Sandra goes to Monica for information about another position in the company, the two women are networking. If Annabelle suggests that Madison contact a family friend who is a Marketing Director, Madison is being referred to a person who may be able to help her search for a marketing job. This is another form of networking.

Enriching Social and Professional Lives

By broadening your access to new people, you are enhancing your social and professional life. While this can happen in person, Facebook and LinkedIn® have established a forum for reaching a larger number of people. Many organizations have a presence online and offline, such as Powerlunch! and Toastmasters International. In addition, there are women's associations and various Web sites for diversity, race, and culture as well as most areas of professional and personal interest.

- ◆ Facebook enables you to find old friends and meet the people they know. You get to see photos and follow what they are doing on a daily basis. You can send a message and dialogue. It is like stopping by to see a neighbor online.
- ◆ LinkedIn® is focused on professionals. On this site, you can meet other professionals, post a résumé, search for jobs, contact hiring managers, and follow target companies. You can join groups and connect with people who have similar professional interests.



FIGURE 1. Some social networking sites can potentially open the door to a great new career.



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: Career Networking Assessment for Job Seekers

How well do you network? Check out the Career Networking Assessment for Job-Seekers at www.quintcareers.com/career_networking_assessment.html. Taking this quiz will give you an opportunity to see how well you network with your contacts. It will help you with your ability to create and maintain relationships. In addition, it will assist you with recognizing your value of networking and how you strategize to keep expanding your network. Hopefully, it will get you to think about methods you might add to your efforts.

DEVELOP NETWORKING STRATEGIES

Start by organizing information about your acquaintances. Create a list of people to contact, and store this information manually on a rolodex or electronically on a cell phone, computer, or personal data assistant. You can use software (e.g., Microsoft Outlook or Gmail) by accessing the “Contacts” feature. Once you input this information, you will need to keep it current by updating phone numbers, fax numbers, or email and mailing addresses on a continuous basis.

Online Networks

Your next step is to research online social and professional networks. Facebook and LinkedIn® are the best places to start. Facebook is oriented toward friends, whereas LinkedIn® is for professionals and has groups that may interest you. Also, Twitter, Windows Live Spaces, and others enable you to access information and dialogue. You can interact directly with your contacts or join a group that interests you to meet new people and share information.

Regular Interaction

Interact with your network regularly. Become **proactive**—take an active role and initiate contact with people in your network instead of waiting for them to initiate contact with you. Routinely call or email people on your contact list. For instance, send holiday, birthday, or thank-you cards. In addition, you can enhance your exchanges by uploading information that you want to share.

Membership and Meetings

To expand your network, join associations, clubs, or groups. Also, attend professional meetings. Start conversations by sharing information or by learning about the knowledge possessed by others. Read professional journals, articles, newspapers, and books. Register for Webinars or dialogue in chat rooms so you can be a contact or a resource. Search for specialty Web sites.

Management Tools

To stay on top of your networking activity, there are social media management tools that access multiple sites at one location. HootSuite (www.hootsuite.com) is a leading social media dashboard that lets you manage Facebook, Foursquare, LinkedIn®, Twitter, MySpace, and other accounts. RockMelt (www.rockmelt.com) is an add-on for your browser that enables you to manage your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, Gmail, and other accounts.

Summary:



Networking strategies afford you the opportunity to access people who can help you, and you can help them as well. This happens personally and professionally. While it begins with the people you know in your immediate circle, you will want to extend your network and reach to people with whom you share social and professional interests. The more you build relationships, the more comfortable it becomes to reach out for resources, knowledge, and talent when you need help.

Keep contact data in one place so it is easy to access. Also, establish a routine for staying in touch with the people you know. Then start researching places for meeting new people. This can be done in person by attending networking meetings or by joining associations. Look for social and professional networks, groups, and blogs online where you can actively participate. The key is being proactive by initiating contact rather than waiting for others to act.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is a referral?
2. Explain immediate networking and extended networking.
3. List at least two networking Web sites.
4. Describe the benefits of networking.
5. What are some effective methods of networking?



FIGURE 2. Who will help you find your next contact?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



While you are being encouraged to network, it is important to grasp the dangers on the Internet. There are many things to consider online:

1. Choose your social network carefully. Evaluate the site before you use it, and make sure you understand the privacy policy. This is especially important when expanding your network beyond the major social networking sites.
2. Give thought to who you are selecting to friend on a social networking site. Extended contacts can be people you do not know, so get an introduction when possible. Identity thieves might create fake profiles to obtain information from you.
3. Do not allow social networking services to scan your email address book. When you join a social network, you might be asked to enter your email address and password to determine if your contacts are on the network. This enables the site to send messages to everyone on your contact list. Instead, type the address of your social networking site directly into your browser or your personal bookmarks.
4. Know what you have posted about yourself, and avoid publicizing private information. If a hacker wants to break into your home, you make it easy when you post your vacation. If they want to hack your financial or other accounts, they click “Forgot your password?” on an account page and look for the answers to your security questions. If you put your pet’s name as a security answer on an account and it is posted on Facebook, you provide easy information.
5. Do not trust that a message you receive is from someone you know. Hackers send messages that look like they are from your friends. Cybercriminals can create links even on sites that you trust. If the message looks suspicious, contact your friend using an alternate method (e.g., a phone call or text).
6. Use caution when you click links. Whether you find a link on your email or a social network, links can be used to obtain your information and access your network connections.

Web Links:



Career Networking

http://www.quintcareers.com/minority_networking_organizations.html

Social Networking Safety

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/social-networking.aspx>

Top Social Networking Sites

http://webtrends.about.com/od/socialnetworking/a/social_network.htm