

Three Ways to Network to a New job

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The best jobs -- as many as 70-80 percent, according to some figures -- usually aren't advertised. And the jobs that are advertised often trigger a flood of resumes, pitting you against hundreds of other candidates for a single opening. Instead of focusing on just ads, you should focus most of your job search efforts on cracking the "hidden" job market. And the best way to do that is to expand your network of professional contacts.

"Networking for a job change or to get off unemployment is nearly essential, since people -- not computers -- hire other people," says Matt Noah, CEO of Chanhassen, Minn.-based, NetSuds.com, a firm that helps professionals build and enhance their network of contacts.

Here are three ways you can network better and find your next job fast.

Attend industry events

No matter what you do, there's probably a regular event of some kind where potential employers in your industry gather. Identify events or venues that will most likely help your job search, then go there.

"Typically, the more focused the event, the better," says Noah. "If you are a plumber, don't go to an electrician's trade show, for example. And size matters -- events are popular and well-attended if they provide value to the people in attendance."

So, attend well-focused, popular events. You can find them advertised in trade journals, the business section of the Sunday paper, or search for them online at www.google.com.

Join a job club

These aren't very high-tech or exciting; just plain effective. In a good job club, you'll meet weekly or monthly with 10-30 other people to share leads, provide support and practice such skills as interviewing and negotiating for salary. Job clubs are usually free, so don't fret about membership costs.

You'll find job clubs all around you. Contact your local library, church, community groups and state employment agency for help in contacting one or more that suit your needs.

If your city publishes a free employment weekly newspaper, be sure to check the announcements section to find job clubs; you may also find them listed in your phone book.

Perfect your pitch

No matter how you network, you'll eventually have to tell people what kind of job you're after. So develop a 20-30-second "pitch," describing who you are and what you do. Focus on your unique combination of specific skills, knowledge and experience.

Example pitch: "I'm a tech support professional with five years of help desk experience. I've encountered and solved just about every problem imaginable. Before that, I completed officer's training as an ROTC student while earning my MIS degree. This gives me a broader range of technical, leadership and problem-solving skills than most folks."

According to marketing expert Larry Chase at www.larrychase.com, "I find people appreciate it when you can deliver your pitch in less time than they anticipated. It telegraphs that you are clearly focused and waste no time getting to the point."

So get out there and attend industry events, join a job club and create a 30-second sound bite for yourself. Doing so will help you find -- and get -- the 70-80 percent of jobs that are filled by networking.

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