Networking:

Building Relationships,

Making Friends

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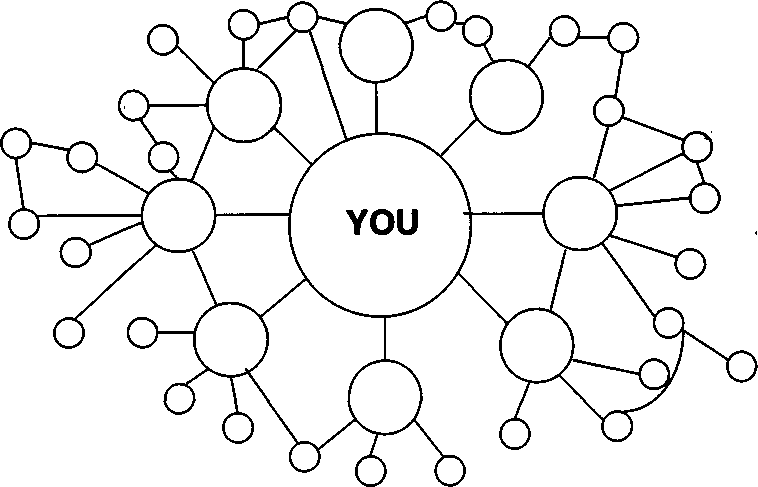
Samuel **W. Emory**

YOUR NETWORK

Human Resources Development

Central Piedmont Community College

**YOUR NETWORK…**

****

…IS ALL THE PEOPLE YOU

KNOW, EVERYONE YOU HAVE

MET, AND EVERYONE WHO

KNOWS THE PEOPLE YOU

KNOW.

Table of Contents

I. What is this "Networking?" Page 5  
A. Definitions  
B. Examples

II. Why should I network? 6  
A. Statistics  
B. Reasons for networking

III. How do I network? 9  
A. Overview  
B. Step-by-step

IV. What do I need to do before I start? 10  
A. How is my attitude  
B. What can I do?  
C. What do I know?  
D. How can I show them?

V. I'm ready to start. What should I do now? 16  
A. Seven Rules  
B. Getting Started  
C. Setting appointments

VI. How do I stay organized? 20  
A. Networking Contact List  
B. Networking Record  
C. Target Company List  
D. Calendar/organizer

VII. What do I do when I get there? 25

A. Relax and make friends

B. Ask questions

C. Discover problems/needs  
VIII Final Words 29

Appendix 30

***Note:*** *This document was scanned from the original printed text. Some minor discrepancies may be noted. Please overlook same.*

**Networking: Building Relationships,**

**Making Friends**

Processes are always difficult to define. It is easy to define each step in the process, as well as the goals, purposes and results of the process. But it is always difficult to bring all the steps, purposes and outcomes together into a simple, all-encompassing definition.

To define networking, we must take into account all of the possible goals and purposes, the methods and steps involved, and results we expect to attain. Since people use networking for many reasons, in many ways, and for different results, we must have a broad definition to work with. Simply put:

*Networking* is the process of purposefully developing relations with others.1

This allows us many different methods and purposes for our networking, but we will focus on using networking to advance our careers. This may mean to start or re-start a career for some or to change or redirect a career for others. So, for our purposes, we may define networking as: **The process of developing on-going relations with others in order to develop your career.**

While this formal definition of networking does help to understand the process, it may sound contrived and even ominous. So, it may be more helpful to look at how we use different types of networking everyday without even knowing it. We call networking by different names depending on the context. For instance:

In **kindergarten** we call it **sharing**

**In school** we call it **cheating**

**In religion** we call it **fellowship**

**In personal relations** we call it **playing the field**

**In clubs** we call it **sharing interests**

**In stores** we call it **shopping**

**In libraries** we call it **researching**

**In associations** we call it **developing contacts**

In **workplaces** we call it **benchmarking**

**In *Job hunting*** we call it ***Networking***

'Ronald L. Krannich, Ph.D., Careering and Re-Careering for the 1990's. Impact Publications, Woodbridge, VA, 1991, p. 239.

5

**GETTING TO YOUR**

**NEXT EMPLOYER**

We can best see networking in the job hunt as a means of getting to your next employer. Networking in itself cannot get you a job. Networking is not a replacement for other job search necessities like a good resume. Networking can even be a lot of work. It requires hours of time in meetings and interviews, time to organize, make phone calls and plan strategies. So, why would anyone want to network as a method of job hunting?

**Why Should I Network?**

New job-seekers soon are confronted with some very disturbing and discouraging statistics. According to many employment experts:

The average job seeker must send out over 500 resume's to get a job interview! The average job seeker must send out over 1,400 resumes to land a job!

(That adds up to over $500.00 just in postage! Add printing costs.)

Only about 15% of all jobs are ever advertised.

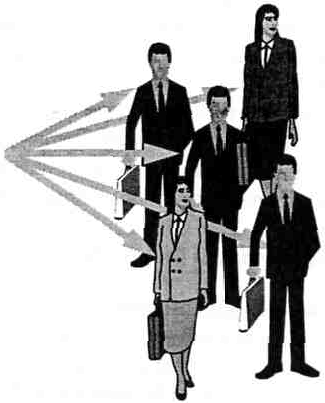
Less than 10% of jobs are handled by employment agencies, recruiters,

headhunters, etc.



Nearly 75% of jobs are filled through word of mouth. This is known as the hidden job market.

6



Display ads in newspapers draw 500 or so resumes. The larger the ad, the larger

the number of responses. The more desirable the job, the larger the

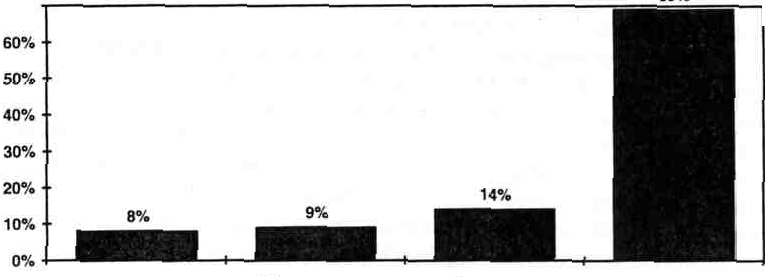
number of responses.

Agencies, recruiters, headhunters, etc., are in the business of serving their client

companies, not the job hunter. So, they typically are looking for the

perfect candidate and not just an approximate fit.2

**Effectiveness of Job Hunting Techniques**



69%

70%

Placement **Firms**

Newspapers

Networking

**Mass**

Mailings

Another employment expert has discovered that developing relationships through networking is at least five times more effective than other job search technique.3

Not only are these statistics discouraging, they can be down-right depressing. But, networking can **quadruple the job market by tapping into the "hidden job market."** The statistics often causes job-hunters to accept a position lower than what they deserve or desire. The job-hunter who relies on the traditional methods of job-hunting (newspaper ads, agencies, employment services) is dealing with a very limited market — only about 25% of the actual available job market. Networking opens up a much broader market.

**Networking** can also **increase your chances of getting the** best jobs. The best jobs are most often filled by word-of-mouth rather than by advertising. Those who have the power to hire are very protective of these positions. They may not want the general public to know that such sensitive or powerful positions are open. Some see these select jobs as being unattainable to them because they do not know the "right people."

**Networking may** allow **you** to **find a job that fits you perfectly.** Perhaps the most hopeful aspect of the hidden job market occurs when the employer is not even aware that they are hiring. This happens when the networker helps the employer identify problems in the business and the effect that these problems are having on the business.

2(For these and other important staiistics see:

Richard Bowles, Whal Qplor Is Yc^r Parachgie?^ Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, 1989.

^Surviving a Layoff. Dahlstrom & Co.,

7

When you can prove that your salary would be less than the amount you can save or add to the bottom line, you have just created a job opening. Since you have helped invent this position, you can help to set a higher salary, the job description, the level in the organization, and the level of responsibility.

**Networking also allows you to practice your job hunting skills.** Just like with any other challenging activity, you need to practice the skills that you will use in your job hunt—describing your skills and values, showing your career direction, handling objections, etc. While you can practice these techniques on family members and friends, you may begin to strain these relationships and may not get the comments you need to improve. Why not, then, practice your skills with the people who would eventually evaluate you in the hiring process anyway?

**By networking, you can also ensure greater career stability.** One of the lessons of the layoffs of the 1980's and 1990's is that very few jobs are secure. Companies that we had trusted as "layoff proof began to down-size and shed employees. While employees had felt secure in their jobs, they had limited their networks to those who surrounded their desk or workplace. Why should they spend the time networking when their job was secure? The lesson is that there are no truly secure jobs; and to survive in a rapidly changing marketplace, we must increase the breadth and diversity of our networks. In case something does happen, you are already on your way to a positive career transition.

**Networking can increase your knowledge and expertise.** When networking, you begin to learn more and more about the companies that are growing and changing, increasing market share and building for future success. Without this knowledge, we could easily land a position on a sinking ship and have to job hunt again soon. Also, you become an expert on the industry so that you will be increasingly desirable to other employers.

**Building relationships through networking also helps you retain the sense of friendship and camaraderie that we develop in the workplace.** When you are out of work, you may lose this sense of commonality with others. When you are working but not satisfied, you may not be able to tell coworkers that you are looking. So, again, you may lose this sense of friendship.

**Networking can create a team to help with your job search.** As shown above, networking can transform your sense of the job hunt from isolation to teamwork. When you network, your contacts will be looking for information and leads for you. Because teams are usually much more effective than individuals working alone, you increase your effectiveness in the job search while enjoying the relationships you build.

To summarize, establishing relationships through networking allows you to:

1. Increase the job market

2. Find better jobs

3. Find the right job for you

4. Practice job hunting skills

5. Provide greater job security

6. Increase your knowledge and expertise

7. Develop rewarding relationships and friendships

8. Increase your self-esteem

9. Enjoy friendship and camaraderie

10. Have a whole team working for you.

Take a moment to review the above list. How can building friendships and relationships through networking help in your job search? What results could you begin to see in your life by investing your time and efforts in a network? What can you do to ensure the effectiveness of your network? Would you be willing to add value to your network to ensure your success?

**So, How do I Network?**

Networking can best be viewed as a cyclical process rather than a linear process. That is, you often repeat the steps in networking as you add new contacts and information and reevaluate your goals. In addition, you will repeat some steps for existing contacts. Before explaining the intricacies, let's take a look at the steps you will need to take to effectively network.

A Step-by-Step Look at Networking

1 Prepare yourself to network

Check your attitude

Know yourself, your skills; attributes, and goals>

Know your trade or industry Prepare the tools: cards, résumés, calendar

2 Get organized

Make out your lists

Develop. a phone script

Develop an introduction

3 Begin networking

Call your contacts

Meet with your contacts

Follow up

4 Repent steps 1-3

1. Accept a job
2. **Keep Networking**

9

**What should I do before I start?**

There are several tools that you can bring to your network that will help to ensure success. Some are physical tools and some are tools of the mind. None of them are absolutely essential to successful networking, but they make networking easier and more enjoyable. Because of this, these tools also make networking more effective, and that is what is important— establishing relationships to conduct an effective job search.

**How is my attitude?**

**A Networker's Motto**

It may seem obvious to say that your attitude is important in the job search. To say that it is important in networking may seem just as obvious. **But, the importance of a positive attitude cannot be overemphasized.**

What then is a positive attitude? Simply put, a positive attitude is hope for the future. This can show up as a willingness to learn and grow, openness to opportunity, or simply unbridled optimism—the assumption of a positive outcome. We might call this the Networker's Motto:

**Whatever can go right will go right, if I will only let it.**

Too many job-hunters carry a negative attitude with them throughout the job search. While it is understandable why many job-hunters develop a negative attitude (resentment, bitterness, low self-esteem, lack of control, etc.), displaying that attitude can quickly limit an employer's interest in you. Would you like to hire a resentful, embittered, depressed, or disorganized employee? Probably not. Employers do not have the time or desire to be your therapist. Nor is it their responsibility. They would rather hire someone who is more optimistic and emotionally stable.

It would be pointless to ignore the fact that job-seekers have some very real issues that they must deal with. Many job-seekers have some deep wounds that must heal. In addition, they may have problems that have nothing to do with the job search. However, any display of these problems can be counterproductive, especially in networking. You are asking for a favor from your networking contacts. Try not to ask them to take on

these other issues also.4

A positive outlook toward life, your career, your industry and specific companies

does many things for you in networking. First, people tend to like and trust positive

4 You should seek help for any emotional issues that can be hindering your job search. Seeking help for a problem simply shows your intelligence, good judgment, and willingness to grow. It says no more about your value and integrity than calling an appliance repairman would. If it is broken, you would have it repaired, right? Similarly, if you need a simple repair to be better in your job search, seek the help you need.

10

people more so than negative people. This means that you will be more readily received and will get more information when you are positive than when you are negative.

Also, a positive attitude allows you to look for opportunity when it is there. Often, opportunity is presented but ignored. For instance, a manager may complain about the fact that work piles up when his customer service people are out sick. Someone with a negative attitude may join in the complaint with a comment about employee reliability. On the other hand, a positive person might see this problem as an opportunity:

*"In* ***my last job,*** *we had similar problems. We* ***were able*** *to solve this problem* ***when we*** *implemented* ***my*** *unique schedule to handle a variable workforce. Productivity remained high and budget remained low."*

**Persistence and Practice**

A positive attitude can also give you the persistence you need to continue your networking. The truth is that networking can be hard work; but with a positive attitude, you begin to have fun in your conversations. You learn new information, share positive experiences, become a valued expert in your industry. You might even share a laugh and a smile. With a negative attitude, you almost eliminate this.

The key to displaying a positive attitude in your network, regardless of how many negative emotions you may feel, is to practice. Listen to how you talk to others in various types of conversations. Ask yourself these questions:

**• Am I complaining about past experiences?**

**• Do I feel strong emotions welling up in my conversation?**

• **Are others** **trying to get out of** **the conversation too quickly?**

**• Do I hearothers .complaining. about their lives?**

**• What is the focus of my conversation -- the past, or the-future?**

* **Do others avoid eye contact with me?**
* **Do you hear a sarcastic tone in your voice? In the other person's voice?**

If you can answer yes to these questions, even some of them, you may be displaying a negative attitude. Often, those who display such a negative attitude are

completely unaware of it. So, you may need to listen closely to yourself."

There are many texts on developing and maintaining a positive attitude. You will

probably want to read these texts during your job search as sources of encouragement and hope. Most of the current work focuses on the nature of our relationships with others.

" Technique: **You may wish to listen to yourself to see if you sound negative. Try taping yourself as you discuss a topic with a friend. Then, listen to yourself on tape. How many negatively charged words do you hear? Try repeating the same discussion without using negative words.**

11

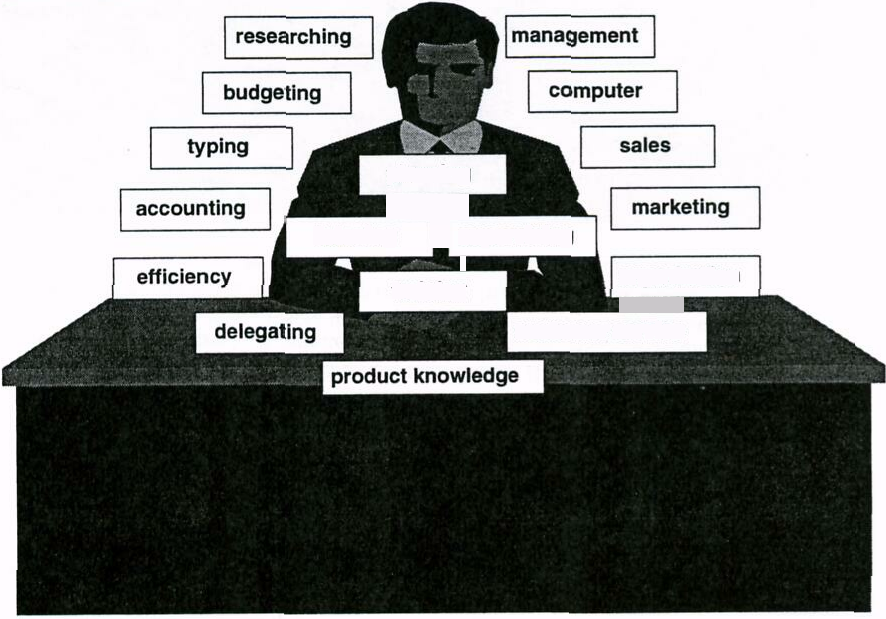
**Win-Win Relationships**

We now focus on "Win-Win" relationships. Basically, this means that when we deal with others, we should strive to ensure that both or all parties benefit from the relationship. If you receive from another person, then you should give equally. If you give to another person, you should receive equally. In these simple terms, this is only fair and just. Most people strive for this fairness in their business as well as their personal relationships.

For our purposes, though, the "win-win" concept has a profound effect. Since you are networking to receive information and advice, then you cannot leave the relationship at that point and maintain fairness. In order for both parties to win, you need to give to the relationship also. What, then, can you give to the relationship so that both panics win? Start with sharing your positive attitude and your interest and caring for the individual you are meeting with.

**What can you do?**

Do yourself and your networking contact a huge favor**—*know yourself.*** You can save yourself a lot of time by knowing your skills, values and motivations so that you can quickly and clearly discuss what you can do for a company. You should be well-versed in your past accomplishments, achievements and experiences, and be able to discuss them. You should know what skills you can offer a company, and what problems you can solve for them**.**

****

planning

listening supervising

I training

organization

customer service

12

In addition to knowing what your skills are, you should also know how to answer these questions:

What is your mission in life? What are your career objectives and goals? What is your vision for the future? What are your dreams?

If you do not know them, then start your self-discovery now. It may take a long time to discover your goals and visions and learn about your skills, so you may as well start. It is also important to know how your skills, motivations and values relate to your career objective.

Once you know yourself, you should learn to talk about yourself in positive terms. Most people are uncomfortable with complementing themselves. It can be seen as bragging and is generally not accepted in American culture. However, this does not mean that you have to defame yourself. In an attempt to avoid bragging, many people learn to criticize themselves in their speech. How many times have you heard others (or yourself) say:

"Oh, well, it was nothing."

"Anyone could have done this."

"I'm not really very good at..."

"I can't do that because..."

"Yes, but I don't have much experience in..."

"But, ..."

While phrases like this seem to avoid the bragging, they are in fact just as self-centered as bragging would be. Such statements may even be an invitation for flattery from others. How much more self-centered can someone be than to fish for compliments?

So, learn to take credit for the skills and accomplishments that you have. No one is asking you to be the absolute expert at anything. In fact, there is always someone, somewhere who is better at a certain skill than you are. The only thing that you are expert in is being yourself.

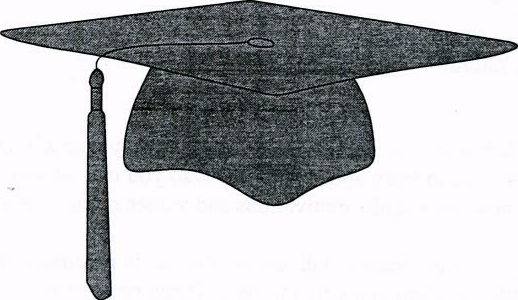
**What do I know about the industry/career?**

One thing that you can bring to your network is your knowledge of your business, industry and career. This is something that-you have uniquely developed through your schooling, other learning, work experiences, relationships with others and general life experiences. Only you have collected the exact knowledge that you have.

It is also important to have confidence in what you know. Even if you are right out of school, you have collected an immense amount of knowledge about business or chemistry or social sciences or just getting along with others. Don't sell yourself short. The attributes that employers most want to hire are not formally taught in schools or in

13

training programs: responsibility, reliability, appearance, and attitude. Take credit for the attributes and knowledge that you do have and begin learning what you need to learn.



We all have more to learn about specific industries or careers. Even the greatest experts can learn from others. So, we all can begin to develop the skills and knowledge that will create future success. Take classes at your local community college or university to increase skills. Learn about new trends in your industry at seminars and trade shows. Read industry magazines available at your local public library or college libraries in your town. Be thirsty for the knowledge that can ensure your future.

Be willing to share this information. As you learn more and more about your industry and your career, you become an expert and a source for information. You will learn even more in your conversations with your networking contacts. You can show your discretion by not revealing confidential information, but you certainly can share general information about industry trends.

By sharing the information you have collected, you become a valued expert in your industry or career field. Your contacts will begin to seek advice from you and ask for your opinions. Eventually, you will be recognized as such an expert that they will want you to work with them. This may be how you reach your eventual goal of advancing your career.

Your ability to become a recognized expert in the industry does carry a responsibility related to your "**Win-Win**" attitude. You will begin to be aware of the problems that certain individuals, companies and industries face. When you know these problems, you can be looking for solutions. Read trade journals to see how others are solving these problems. Listen to your other networking contacts to see how they have filled similar needs. Think constantly of how you can help your networking contacts and be generous towards them. Show them the same generosity they have shown you.

**How can I show** **them?**

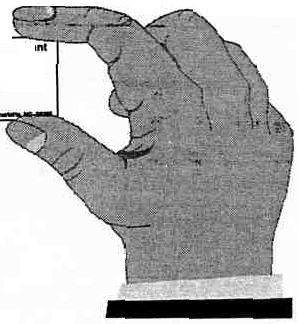
You need to have a resume in order to effectively job search. There are so many different rules, styles and recommendations for résumé’s that we will not try to go into them here. Your résumé' should present you as accomplishment oriented, action oriented and skilled. Certainly do not lie on your resume, but do take credit for the things that you have done.

Use your résumé as a reminder of the things that you have done for other companies. Obviously, your résumé cannot be a complete biography of your career, but it can highlight your achievements and accomplishments. If you need to ask your

14

networking contact about your career plans, then the resume can be a handy tool for reference. It is an even better tool to leave behind as a reminder of who you are and what you can do.

Another effective networking tool is the business card. Today, business cards are inexpensive and quick to print. So, for about ten to twenty-five dollars you can have business cards printed for yourself just as if you were already working for a company.



**TriBur Coni**

**Samuel W. Emory**

**(704) GS5-M3J**

Select a style that you are comfortable with, but remember to include the following items:

• Your name

• Your address

• Your phone number

• Your occupation (Career changers should put their new career.)

Remember that you are paying for the printing of these business cards. Be sure that you are happy with the wording and quality of the printing since they will reflect on your professionalism.

Again, business cards are a great tool to leave behind as a reminder of who you are and what you can do. They are terrific to use when attending trade shows, seminars, networking functions, and any place where you will briefly meet people and want them to remember you.

Other tools have been developed to serve similar purposes to business cards. You can today print rolodex style cards on computer printers or through quick print shops. Your rolodex cards can include a brief description of what you are looking for in addition to your name, address and phone number.

15

OK, I’m Ready. What Now?

**7** **Rules for networking that will make you** **# 1**

1. **Don’t limit your network.** Tell everyone you know or meet what you are looking for. You cannot know someone’s potential as a resource until you get to know them. They might know your next employer from their neighborhood, church, club or other relations.
2. **Do not ask your networking contacts for a job.** This may seem contradictory. You are looking for a job, why not ask, right? Actually, this is counterproductive. They want to help you, but feel guilty because they do not have a job opening at this time. So to avoid the discomfort they feel, they will rush to get you out of their office as quickly as possible, and will avoid you at all cost in the future.
3. **Write thank you notes – *Every Day!!!*** Thank you notes are necessary, not an option. By writing thank you notes, you show your professionalism, concern for the contact, concern for your future, effectiveness and thoughtfulness. These are all qualities that employer desire in their employees. *Write thank you notes the same day as you make your networking contact so that you cannot put off the task.*
4. **Feed your network with fresh thoughts, information, referrals and contacts.** A good way to think of your network is as a vegetable garden. You want to harvest quality fresh produce. But, to do so, you must start with fertile ground by knowing yourself and your direction and goals. Then you must feed and water the network regularly with your positive attitude and information. You should chart the progress of each contact so that you will know when feeding and watering are necessary. And finally, you should exercised pest control by removing negative thoughts and negative comments from your conversation.
5. **Courtesy is important.**  You are asking for time, effort and information from them. In return, you need to show gratitude by sharing information with them, by showing a positive attitude, and by thinking of how you can help them. A lack of courtesy can endanger your future because they may be or may know your future employer.
6. **Be willing to accept advice.** If you are going to ask for their advice, at the very least listen. This is simply showing respect for them. Conversely, not listening to their advice shows disrespect. They will return either the respect or disrespect you show them.
7. **Think of your network contacts as on-going relationships.** Contacting them only once can be evidence of manipulative behavior, instability, lack of focus, superiority and arrogance. Employers do not want to hire these characteristics**.**

16

**Starting Your Networking**

You start networking just like you start any other project—by simply beginning. It is probably easiest to call or visit someone that you know. Ask that person for about 15 to 20 minutes of their time. Explain that you are conducting a job search and you would like to get their help and advice. Also explain that you do not expect them to have a job for you or to know where you can find a job, but would just like some information.

Most people will not refuse such a simple request. In fact, most people are actually interested in helping people in general and helping job-hunters in particular. Especially in times of corporate layoffs and down-sizing most people are more than willing to help and to learn more about the job market from the real experts—those who are looking for a job.

For several reasons, it is best to set an appointment to meet with the person face-to-face rather than to speak with them on the phone for a few reasons. First, in a face-to-face meeting, they will be more likely to help you. It is easy to turn someone down on the phone, but much more difficult to do so in person. The physical and visual presence helps to form a bond between you and your contact.

Second, you both will be able to get non-verbal clues from your interview. Unfortunately, the telephone allows for only a limited amount of communication since up to 60% or more of communication comes from non-verbal clues like facial expressions and gestures. This additional input may be critical to your success with your contact.

Third, you will be able to show your networking contact more directly your appropriateness for the career or industry. They will be able to see your re"sum6 and know about your qualifications. They will also know better about your career objectives and where you might want to use your skills. Also, they will be able to see your **Target Company List** in case they cannot think of any referrals for you.

Last, but not least important, setting up appointments will get you out of the house and back into work places. This inevitably raises your self-esteem and gives you a feeling of accomplishment during the job search. It also gives you the chance to evaluate different work environments to see which styles fit you better.

There will be a few who do not want to meet with you. It may be possible to speak with them on the phone, but unless you are very practiced at telecommunications, you will not be able to get the information you need. More importantly, you will not be able to build the long-term relationship that can be so rewarding professionally and personally.

**Getting Appointments**

In order to be most effective in getting networking appointments on the phone, you will probably need to prepare and practice an introduction or **One Minute Commercial.** It is called this because it acts like a brief advertisement of your skills and accomplishments so that your contact has an idea of how to best help you. It may be

17

individual but should be specific enough to encourage their help and short enough to keep them listening."

Your **One Minute Commercial** should contain the following information:

**Your Name.** Use what you chose to be called on the job.

**What You Do.** This may include a job title, job objective, job history with   
 accomplishments, education and training, and any other relevant   
 information

**What you can do** Tell how you can help a company improve. Can you save them **for a company.** money, increase revenue, solve specific problems or bring prestige to a   
 company?

**Why you are** Remember you are calling to seek their help and advice in your job  **calling.** search. *You do not expect them to have a job for you or to know   
 where you can find a job. You simply want their advice.* Ask for an   
 appointment to meet with them for 15 to 20 minutes.

When you call your networking contact, you should have a pen, your resume", some note paper and your calendar handy. When they agree to meet with you, schedule the appointment at their convenience whether that be during normal working hours, or early in the morning, or rnaybe after work.

Immediately write the appointment in your calendar. This prevents two problems. First, because you have your calendar there, you cannot schedule two appointments for the same time. This is a nightmare that any unorganized businessperson constantly fears. Second, you will not forget about an appointment, because you will have written it into your calendar. Provide enough time between appointments to travel to the next meeting.

Always confirm your appointment with the contact so that you are sure there are no mistakes. Read back to them the day, date, time and location of your meeting. This may seem simple, but many appointments are missed because someone was looking at the wrong month in their calendar. By carefully confirming this with the contact, you avoid any embarrassment or anger that might occur because of a missed appointment.

Continue phoning and scheduling appointments. The first phone calls will be easy because you are calling someone you know. As you approach those that you do not know as well, the phone calls may seem more difficult; but by then you will be so practiced at the process, that it will seem just a simple task to be completed each day.

Remember to use referrals names as a means of gaining an appointment. Ask your contacts if you can use their names when you call to meet someone they referred you to. When you call the new contact, you can say:

**\*\* Note:** Being specific is important in the overall job search as well as in networking. It is very difficult to help someone who cannot tell you what they want. But, when you express clear goals, you make ii easier on the contact to help you.

18

***"Hello, this is Sam Emory. Jane Johnson suggested that I give you a call. We were talking about trends in computerized accounting systems and Jane told me that you have become quite an expert in this area. I am conducting a job search in accounting, and..."***

This will open many doors for you that otherwise might be closed. Not only are you complimenting your new contact, but you are recognizing the fact that you have a relationship with one of their friends or acquaintances. Since you are a friend of a friend, the contact will be much more likely to help you.

**Getting Past the Gatekeeper**

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There will be times when you are calling for   
 appointments or meetings that you will be confronted with   
 a secretary, receptionist or assistant who will not allow you   
 to speak to your contact. Or, you may be confronted with a   
 voice-mail system that will not allow you to speak to a   
 human being. Don't get too frustrated. There are ways to   
 get around these "gatekeepers."

First, remember that the gatekeepers are only doing   
 their job as they have been told. There is no reason to   
 resent them or to get mad at them. In fact, there is   
 tremendous reason to become friends with them. They   
 have a tremendous

amount of power. They may be able to control whether or when you will get to meet with your contact. If you call and cannot reach your contact, make it a profitable call by beginning a relationship with the gatekeeper. Be friendly, pleasant, and jovial with him/her. They may be able to convince their supervisor to meet with you. Try asking the gatekeeper when it would be best to call. Tell him/her what you are doing and that you are not seeking a job from that company, but would like to seek advice and information about the industry/job market from that manager.

With some gatekeepers, you will not be able to establish that relationship. Understand that they are very busy and are dealing with dozens of phone calls every day. They do not mean to be unfriendly, but find it necessary to be short with you in order to be effective. So, if you cannot establish a relationship with the gatekeeper, here are a few tips on getting to your contact.

19

**Tips for Getting Past the Gatekeeper**

**Call early in the morning (before 8 a.m.).** Often, managers come to work early in the morning and answer their own phones. If you call before the gatekeeper arrives, you can often get directly through.

**Call late hi the afternoon (after** 5 p.m.) for the same reasons.

**Call at lunch tune.** If you call when the gatekeeper is at lunch, the replacement may or may not put you directly through.

**Reference a friend of the contact**. If you have permission from the 'person who referred you to the contact, you can leave a message that says that Jane Doe suggested you call. When the contact calls you back, be prepared for the

call. If you are not in, then you can call back and honestly tell the gatekeeper

that your contact is expecting your call.

**Send a letter.** If you really want to see this prospect, then send a letter

asking for an appointment. In the letter, ask if you can call at a certain time

on a certain day! (You must follow through on your promises.) When you

call back, the contact will be waiting for your call.

**Get creative.**  Send a note to the gatekeeper asking for his/her assistance in

getting an appointment with your contact. Or, drop»by with a small gift (donuts in the morning, or a flower in a bud^ vase; or a small desk item like a letter opener). You do not need to spend a lot of money to be recognized as a thoughtful and deserving caller.

For voice mail, it is rare that you will get a return phone call unless that person knows you. They may assume that you are a salesperson that they do not want to deal with. So, try this. Leave an interrupted message on their voice mail by depressing the disconnect button while you are talking. Your message needs to have your name and phone number first, and then a short teaser that they will be just curious enough to want to return the call.

Probably the best tool in getting past the gatekeeper is simply persistence. The fact that you have called seven or ten times shows that you have the discipline that managers like to hire in their employees. When your name continually shows in phone messages, you show that persistence, and eventually will get a return call just because you showed the discipline and desire and ambition to continue calling.

**How do I stay organized?**

Successfully networking demands that you bring to the process all of the tools listed above: a positive attitude, self-awareness, a good resum6, business cards, and the knowledge you develop. It also requires organization. As with any other project, you

20

should organize to meet the goals of that project. Since your main goal in networking is to gather information and advice about your job search, you should organize to meet this goal.

This means that you should organize the information that you hope to receive in networking as well as the information you do receive. Start with a list of the people you want to contact. Alphabetizing the list will help you find names of contacts and make it easier to add names. A computer is a great tool for this but is certainly not necessary. An address book or simple list will do just as well if not better.

If you are just beginning to network and feel a little uncomfortable with the process, you will probably want to start with a list of people you know well or feel comfortable with. Relatives may be a good place to start, assuming you have a good relationship with them. Friends and close business colleagues are also good network starters since they will want to help you most.

Your **Network Contact List** should contain a minimal amount of information about the contact so that it will be manageable. Basically, this is a telephone list that you can carry with you in your job search. It should contain the information shown in the example.

**Sample Network Contact List**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Title** | **Company Name** | **Address** | **Phone Number** |
| John Adams | President | United States | 1600 Pennsylvania Ave Washington, DC 20012 | 1-800-THE-PRES |
| Sam Emory | Instructor | CPCC | P.O. Box 35009 Charlotte, NC 28235 | 1-704-342-6969 |
| Barbara Jordan | Ex-senator | US Senate | Capitol Hill Washington, DC 20012 | 1-800-555-1111 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Murphy Brown | Inv. Reporter | FYI | 100 W. 57th St. Washington, DC 22001 | 1-800-555-1234 |
| Dean Smith | Coach | UNC | 123 Dean Dome Chapel Hill, NC 27514 | 1-800-555-3456 |
| Richard Vinroot | Mayor | City of Charlotte | City Hall Charlotte, NC 28202 | 1-800-555-4567 |
| Tony Zeiss | President | CPCC | P.O. Box 35009 Charlotte, NC 28235 | 1-704-555-5678 |

While the **Network Contact List** provides useful and handy information, it does not provide the type of in-depth information that you will need to keep your network well organized. As you build your network, you will begin to meet more and more people. Voices of experience warn that it becomes very difficult to keep these new faces and

21

names separate in your mind. To remember what they do and where they work becomes almost impossible.

Imagine your embarrassment when you receive a call from a networking contact who wants you to come in for a job interview. You cannot for the life of you remember who this person is or where they work, so you ashamedly ask and risk offending the contact who remembers you so well. As you begin to meet more and more people, the chance of this happening greatly increases.

So, to avoid offending potential employers, you need to establish a written record. This Networking Record sheet will contain more in-depth information about the contact. Here you can keep notes about meeting times, conversation topics, and follow-up records. The actual format of the Networking Record is flexible. Many have successfully used note cards, while others choose to use 8'/2 X 11 paper in a three-ring binder. The choice is up to you. You should, however, be able to alphabetize these records for easy access. Since each contact will have a separate Networking Record, you will be able to include much more information. You may wish to include even more information than the sample shown below.

**Sample Networking Record**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: | **Jane Doe** | | **Phone: [/04) 333-12:14** | | |
| Title: | **Operations Manager** | | **Home Phone: (704) 535-3456** | | |
| Company: | **ABU Corporation** | |  | | |
| Address: | **1/5 Main Sit.** | | **Interests/hobbies: 1 U\_M, Braves & Hornets t-an** | | |
|  | **P. O.Box 1234** | |  | | |
|  | **Anytown, NC *28222*** | | **Civic Activities: Chamber member. Habitat tor Humanity volunteer, United Way volunteer** | | |
| Referred by: | **James Public, CDE Company** | |  | | |
| **background:** | **Graduate, UNC-CH, Business**  **Worked 12 years Duke Power, Credit Dept. 4 years Piedmont Natural Gas** | |  | | |
| Contact Type | Date | Action Taken | | Follow Up Required | Follow up Completed |
| **Phone call** | **11/11** | **Set up appt, 1 1/15** | | **Confirrn 11/14** | ***✓*** |
| **Meeting** | **11/15** | **Discussed 1 U.M m ABC Corp. Problem: Spvsrs. not committed** | | **bend i raining article on TQM commitment** | ***✓*** |
| **Phone can** | **IZ/3** | **Discussed article: meet again 1Z//** | | **Bring updated resume** | ***✓*** |
| **Meeting** | ***IM/*** | **Discussed how to gain supervisor commitment** | | **How has CDE Co. solved problem?** | ***✓*** |
| **Phone call** | **12/11** | **Told Jane how CDE has handled spvr commitment. Wants to talk more about possible opening.** | | **Call 12/13 to remind about conversation** |  |

22

**(Back of Networking Record**)

**Referrals:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Title** | **Company** | **Address** | **Phone Number** |
| 1 horn as Hardy | vituperations | Standard Co. | *12.5* Main St. Charlotte, NC 28222 | I-/U4-333-2345 |
| Allison Johnson | President, CEU | Johnson Cogs | 422 Front St. Charlotte, NC 28222 | l-/U4-iii-im |
| Joseph Montana | Operations Mgr. | wall St. Widgets | 8978 Wail St. Charlotte, NC 28211 | l-/U4O33-ZZi3 |
| Jane Martin | uk Manager | Mint Stone Uo. | 10425 Flintstone Or. Charlotte, NC 28217 | l-/U4-iii-iiib |
| Nancy Jarvis | executive Asst. | Common Wealth, Inc. | 3244 Jackson Ave. Charlotte, NC 28235 | l-/U4-»5-t)ft/V |

You will want to carry your **Networking Record** with you so that you can jot down important information about the meeting and the referrals that you receive. Since you have a separate column for each piece of information that you need, you will not forget to get the referral's phone number or address. This shows your contact how extremely organized you are and prevents you from having to call back to get such basic information.

When you do receive referrals, you can set up a **Networking Record** for the new contact. Probably, you will want to do this after the meeting where you receive the referral rather than during the meeting. This is something that you can do outside of normal business hours so that you can have as much time as possible to actually meet with people. A great time to do this is after 5 or early in the morning.

Another important record-keeping item that you will need to maintain is a **Target Company List.** This is a list of companies that you are interested in learning more about or that you might want to work with. This can be a very simple list of just company names, or could include specific divisions or departments. Alphabetizing is not necessary but can be helpful in finding company names.

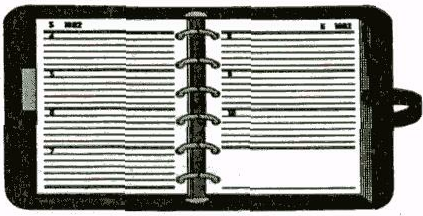
**Sample Target Company List:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CPCC: Maintenance Dept. | Piedmont Natural Gas |
| Duke Power Company | Presbyterian Hospital |
| First Union National Bank | Standard Crankshaft |
| ⇩ | ⇩ |
| NAPA Auto Parts Distribution Center | TJ Maxx Distribution Center |
| NationsBank: Mortgage Department | UNCC: Plant Engineering Dept. |
| 1 rust Department | Verbatim Corporation |

As you receive referrals into these companies, you can set up new **Networking Records.** Having the **Target Company List** handy during your networking meetings will allow you to focus on companies that have the attributes that you are looking for in your new employer. It can also serve as a trigger or reminder for your networking

23

contact. If they say they do not know whom you can contact, ask if they know anyone in your target companies.



A **calendar** is also a necessary and useful item in organizing your networking. Choose the type of **calendar** that will work best for you. Many people use pocket calendars that they can keep with them at all times in case they need to make an appointment. Others use full-size organizer/calendars very effectively. One

warning about these organizers. For many, these are actually *dis*organizers. When they open their portfolio style organizer, anything may spill out: business cards, pens, phone messages, Jimmy Hoffa—anything! Don't let your organizer make the wrong statement about you.

You may also find it necessary to carry a portfolio style notebook with you when you are networking. This is a simple leather or vinyl notebook with a standard S'/i X 11 legal pad inside. Typically there is a pocket opposite the legal pad for you to keep copies of your résumé’s, your **Target Company** **List** and the specific **Networking Records** that you will need for that networking meeting. You might want to keep your **Networking Contact List** with you, but that is not necessary. The only other things you will need during your meeting will be pens, and a few of your business cards and any materials (articles, other contacts) that you have promised to bring to your contact.

There is only one more thing that you will need to start networking—professional appearance. Your appearance during networking should be the same or better than you would look on the job. This means, you need to look clean, neat, and well-groomed. In basic terms: a clean body, clean and neat hair, and clean, well-maintained clothes and shoes.

Generally, you should think in terms of dressing better than you would on the job. If your job requires T-shirts and jeans, you should think about a coat and tie or blouse and skirt. If you would normally wear a suit or jacket and skirt, then you should wear the same during networking.

When your networking contact meets you, he/she should be able to easily think of you in the job. If your appearance is not appropriate, they will not be able to picture you in the job. Imagine networking with a bank president about a career in banking while wearing a sweat suit. Imagine networking with a production manager for a production job while wearing a three-piece suit or evening gown. Neither form of dress would be appropriate. In neither situation would the networking contact be able to think of you as a performer of that job.

Now that you have done all the necessary preparation, you should be able to actually start building relationships through networking. As you will soon see, you have probably been networking all of your life, but might not have been networking as effectively as you need. How, then, do you go about the actual networking to effectively advance your career?

24

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**What do I do when I get there?**

You have now set up an appointment or appointments to meet with your networking contacts. You have prepared for the meeting by knowing your skills, values, motivation, experience and accomplishments. You have prepared a resume (or resumes), networking records, a networking contact list, a target company list, and business cards. You have organized your calendar, and are dressed appropriately. You have arrived at your meeting just a few minutes early to make sure that you could find it easily. So, now what?

First, relax. Remember that you are here to make a friend and build a relationship. You are not on a job interview. You are not here to get married. You are only here to seek advice and information. Think of it as doing research or window-shopping. All you want to do is talk and listen. If you are nervous, try some stress reducing techniques like deep-breathing or tensing and relaxing muscles.

When you arrive at your meeting, please be courteous to the person who greets you. You need to show this person the respect he/she deserves. Be polite and introduce yourself and explain that you have an appointment with (use your contact's name) at (give time). If they are not very busy, try some small talk as this will tend to relax you and make you smile before your meeting.

**25**



Introduce yourself to your contact with a firm and brief handshake. Tell them your name and thank them for meeting with you. Remind them that you are there to seek information and advice about your job search. You might also need to remind them that you do not expect them to have or know about a job for you. You are only there to seek advice from someone who is successful in his/her career.

You will need to have some questions --  
ready to ask so that you get the information you  
need. Generally, the questions should be about

the career and industry that you are in or interested in. You may also ask questions about the contact's company to understand industry trends. Try not to make it sound as if you are asking about job openings, though. This might be a turn off.

Below is a list of some appropriate questions for the networking interview, (not for employment interviews):

•What kind of compensations could I expect in the first year?

•What are the most necessary skills for this job?

•Is Ihere forma! or on-the-job training?

•How can 1 best utilize the degree I have?

•How many people like me have made a successful career change? What kinds of backgrounds did they have?

•Which other professionals should I contact?

•How is the hiring done? Through the grapevine? By direct application?

•How did you break into the field?

•Where do you see a person like me fitting in this {field, company, industry)?

•How should I prepare for a job interview in this field?

•What professional societies or associations should I join?

•What is a typical career path for someone coming in at my level?

•What are the largest obstacles I would face in this job?

•What professional publications on this field should I read?5

•What weaknesses do you see in my qualifications?

•How can I overcome this weakness?

•Be honest. How do you like my resume?

•Does it show a clear focus?

•How does it show my strengths?

•How does it compare with other resume's you have seen?

•What recommendations would you make for improvement?

•What are some important long-term trends affecting your industry?

•How are people in your industry viewing (cite an important trend)?

•How do you see (this important trend) affecting marketing {production, financial strategy, etc.)?

•How could I get better prepared to respond to this trend, either right now while I am seeking a position or later after I have one?

•Describe what my coworkers-workers would be like in this field?

•From what you know about me, what would be my greatest strengths as a (specify a position}?

•Can I keep in touch with you regularly?

5John Anise, "The Networker's **Guide",** National BuEJjiess Employment Weekly.

**26**

Notice that most of these are open questions—that is, they require more than a simple one or two word answer. Open questions are generally a better way to get information because they invite your contact to speak freely in response to the question. By using open questions, you can establish more of a sense of conversation rather than interrogation.

Closed questions can do just the opposite. Asking a series of yes/no questions can make you appear investigative and intrusive. It is almost as if you are a Perry Mason questioning a witness. This can make your contact feel under pressure and on the defensive. Since you want your new networking friend to feel comfortable with you, then you probably do not want to use a lot of closed questions.

More importantly, open ended questions allow you to discover the most important information that you can get as a job-seeker. When you allow your networking friend to speak freely by asking open questions, you invite them to reveal the problems that they, their company, or their industry face in the current market. This allows you to pinpoint the needs that you may be able to fill.

Unfortunately, most job seekers market themselves by listing their skills on a resume", and talking about their skills in an interview. While it is important to know what your skills are, listing your skills for an employer requires them to guess at what you can do for them. How would it help you to show employers exactly what problems you could solve for them or what needs you could fill?

This is basically the same idea as the features/advantages/benefits concept used in sales. For instance, if you list the features of a refrigerator:

16.2 Cu. ft.

3.5 Cu. ft. freezer overhead

Vegetable crisper

Adjustable shelves,

you require the customer to figure out how important these features are to them. On the other hand, you can identify the needs of the customer first, by asking open questions.

Q. How will you most use your refrigerator?

A. We have a lot of dinner parties and it is difficult to store enough   
 prepared foods in our current refrigerator. And we like to buy large   
 cuts of meat to save money. But we have to buy vegetables and fruits in   
small quantities because they good. Bad so quickly.

Then, you show them the benefits that the refrigerator provides:

The 16.2 Cu.ft. capacity will allow you to store enough food for a dinner party.

The 3.5 Cu.ft. freezer allows you to buy meat cheaper in bulk and store it for later. The vegetable crisper keeps your vegetables longer and prevents you from wasting

money on spoiled vegetables.

You can adjust the shelves to keep 2-liter bottles of soda and a gallon of milk for

your children.

**27**

Establishing the needs of employers can be tricky in a normal interview. But by establishing friendships through networking, you are more likely to discuss the real problems that employers face. They will be more open to discussing their problems with friends than with strangers they are interviewing.

To be most effective at discovering problems and needs during your networking meetings you need to ask open questions and follow-up on these questions. When they answer a question about trends in the industry, follow up by asking how they are preparing to meet those trends. Continue asking questions until you help them to reveal a problem or need that they or their company or their industry needs to solve.

For example:

**Q.** What Trends do you see in the poultry, industry?

**A.** The biggest trend these days is towards pre-cooked foods.

**Q.** How is AAA Poultry meeting this trend?

**A**. We need to work harder at that. Our competition is really cleaning up  
this and we are; not.

**Q.** How would it help you to have someone with prepared food experience in  
your company?

A. We need that experience so that we can expand that part of the business.

Q. When I worked at BBB Foods, I helped introduce over 75 new prepared food   
 products, resulting in over $2 million in increased sales?

A. Wow! -That is exactly the type of growth we need in today's market.

Then, discuss solutions for the problems. If you can help your contact to begin solving problems, they will most likely want to hire you. Even if they do not have an opening, they may create one. Just in your friendly conversation, you have established yourself as a valuable expert in the industry.

**Practice Makes Perfect**

It is rare for anyone to be expert at anything from the very beginning. Establishing relationships through networking works the same way. It simply takes practice to become very good or even effective at networking. That is one reason why you should begin your network with friends and relatives. With these people you can make mistakes. But what about those really important contacts with the companies that you really want to work with?

It is probably best to practice your networking skills before you meet with these key contacts. You should feel comfortable with the process and with all of the intricacies of asking questions to establish needs before you approach these contacts. So, if you intend to network your way into a job with ABC Company, and you are not very good at networking, you had better get started now. Can you afford to waste precious time and money by avoiding the practice that will make you successful?

You can prioritize your networking so that you do not meet with these key contacts for the first couple of weeks. This will allow you time to practice the networking

**28**

skills. It will also allow you to gain referrals into your key companies so that you do not have to make cold calls into these companies. You will simply be contacting friends of friends.

**A Final Word**

Using networking as a means of building relationships can provide you with the career success you desire. In today's market, it is the most effective way of getting the job that you want and that meets your needs and desires. But, in order to be effective, your networking must follow the rules shown above. And, you must be persistent. When you begin to establish these relationships, you will recognize how rewarding the experience can be, both professionally and personally.

If I could leave all job-hunters with a final thought, it would be simply this:

*Get out of your own way,  
and let yourself do it  
 Give yourself the freedom to succeed!*

**29**

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|  |  | **Network Contact List** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **Name** | **Title** | **Company Name** | **Address** | **Phone** |
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**30**

**Networking Record**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  | | |  |  | Bus. Phone: | |
| **Title:** |  | | |  |  | Home Phone; | |
| **Company:** |  | | |  |  | Cell Phone: | |
| **Address:** |  | | |  |  | **Interests/hobbies:** | |
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|  |  | | |  |  | **Civic Activities:** | |
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| **Referred by:** |  | | |  |  |  | |
| **Background:** |  | | |  |  |  | |
| **Contact Type** | **Date** | **Action Taken** | **Follow Up Required** | | | | **Complete** |
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**31**

**Networking Record**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  | | |  |  | Bus. Phone: | |
| **Title:** |  | | |  |  | Home Phone; | |
| **Company:** |  | | |  |  | Cell Phone: | |
| **Address:** |  | | |  |  | **Interests/hobbies:** | |
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| **Referred by:** |  | | |  |  |  | |
| **Background:** |  | | |  |  |  | |
| **Contact Type** | **Date** | **Action Taken** | **Follow Up Required** | | | | **Complete** |
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|  |  |  | **Referrals** |  |  |  |  |
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| **recv'd from:** | **Date** | **Name** | **Title** | **Company Name** | **Address** | **Phone** | **checked** |
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32