



Connect To Success

Networking to find opportunities in a new company

 Keener Inspiration

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One of the most difficult things about being an expatriate is not having any kind of established network when you arrive in your new country. We take for granted our friends, work colleagues, old school pals, people we knew from the gym, parents of our children’s friends and family that made up our network base at home. Suddenly you are in a new place and don’t know anyone.

This is particularly difficult if you are looking for a job too. It is estimated that up to 70% of jobs come from the unadvertised market while only about 30% of jobs are filled through the more visible market of advertisements and recruitment firms. The way to tap into that unadvertised market is by networking of course.

But if you don’t have a network how do you begin? If you are like most people, the idea of going out to events and having to approach total strangers in hopes of finding a job opportunity is daunting. So I’d like to challenge you to change your mind set. Instead of seeing networking as pumping fists and shoving your business card at people, think of it like connecting the dots. If you approach networking thinking, ‘how can I connect others to valuable people or resources and make them aware of what I’m looking for’, you will find that eventually the lines will come back to you to complete the picture and actually give you what you need. Doesn’t that sound more enjoyable?

According to British networking guru, Gwen Rhys, networking is “the process of developing and

nurturing a network of contacts in order to maximise opportunities for oneself and others.” The key words in her definition are developing and nurturing. It is a two-way people focused activity where you connect with people. Once you build a relationship, networking is following up and maintaining that contact over a long period of time.

Where should you network? Network everywhere and with everyone. Start with your neighbours, partner’s work colleagues, parents at your child’s new school, and the person standing next to you in a queue. Start conversations with others who are alone. Ask questions and become an active listener. Greet everyone with smile and a friendly hello followed by a positive comment or open-ended question to get a conversation going. At a party or other gathering approach people standing alone and draw them into conversation. Most people hesitate to approach a group of friends already talking. The individual standing alone will welcome your approach and you will find it easy to make your first networking contact.

Each week set a networking goal by planning who you would like in your network and ways that you could meet them. Volunteering is an excellent way to meet new people, especially if you are involved with the planning of an event or greeting people when they arrive. Seek out professional and alumni associations where you could get started.

When meeting all these new people, it’s important to be able to clearly

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express who you are. In twenty-five words or less be prepared to say who you are and what you do in a way that will make the other person want to know more about you. Then, immediately ask questions to learn more about your new contact. Your 'elevator speech' might use the following format suggested by author Joanna Parfitt, "I work with x to y with a result of z."

During the course of your conversation, it is important to make people aware what you are looking for as well as how you could help them. Remember, networking is a two way street. They can't help you unless they know what you need. You'll have greater success approaching networking as market research on your own behalf instead of asking "Do you have a job for me?" Focus on ways you can set up informational meetings. These meetings will allow you to find out more information about your career field and your options while gaining valuable insight from a professional on how to market yourself. Business Coach & Seminar Presenter, Lynne R Christen, suggests you "be prepared with a mental Get and Give List. Networking is a reciprocal process. It is about getting and giving information, resources, advice and referrals. Maintain a mental "Give List"...a tip, idea, resource, or recent discovery you can share. Your "Get List" will be information you are seeking, people you want to meet, and referrals you would like to have."

Make sure you have business cards with your details that you can pass on after getting to know someone

and a name badge that is easily readable if you are at a networking function. It is very important to follow up with people you have meet and that means having some kind of organization system in place so that you remember what you spoke about (I usually jot down a few notes on the back of business cards right after meeting people) ideally you should follow up within 48 hours. As time goes on, use every opportunity to send a follow-up personal note or e-mail, a thank you, congratulations, or a relevant article of information.

Building up a new network is not easy. You may be able to spring board off of your "home" network for their contacts in your new country but often you have to start at square one. If you can think of networking not as a pressure 'hard sell' situation but as a chance to learn more about the field you are hoping to pursue and build relationships with some new people, you will eventually make the right connections and find a job.

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