

# 5 Steps to Successful Networking

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One of the most effective ways to build a career in today's job market is through networking. Some experts say between 35% - 60% of jobs are found through networking contact. However, networking is NOT about asking for a job. Networking is about building relationships. Think of networking as informal auditions to let people know who you are, how you think and why they might want to work with you (or have their friends work with you.)

Career expert Lynne Waymon states "networking is exchanging information, resources and ideas in such a way that builds a relationship." Two key words: *exchange* and *relationship*. Here are 10 steps to make sure your networking is successful.

1. **Have impeccable manners.** If you are calling someone, call from a quiet location. Put a note on your dorm room door to alert entering roommates. E-mails and letters should look professional and be 100% free of grammatical and spelling errors. For in person meetings wear professional clothes that are clean and wrinkle-free. Be on time or 5 minutes early. Dress like you could walk into a management team meeting, be confident in your abilities, but above all, be an eager, attentive listener (understanding the value of the wisdom being shared with you.)
2. **State a clear purpose up front.** Create an "elevator speech" you can deliver on the phone in 10 seconds or less that includes your name, how you got this person's name and number, a statement to build commonality and your purpose for calling (what you are asking for\*.) Ask if this is a good time.

**\* Good things to ask for:**

- this person's career path
- opportunities in this profession
- typical entry level position titles
- suggestions for companies that may offer internships
- what college courses were most helpful to them

**Bad things to ask for:**

- a job
- how much they make
- to give you an internship

Example "Hello. My name is Matt Damon. I'm a student at Hobart College. Your name is listed in our Career Resource Center database as someone who is willing to speak with students about careers in economics. I'm a senior majoring in economics. Do you have about five minutes for me to ask a few questions about how you got into the field? Any insights you can share would be very helpful." (If they say this isn't a good time, ask when you could call back. Let them know how much time you are asking for.)

3. **Be brief.** If on the phone, take no more than 5-7 minutes. E-mails should be brief and to the point. In person networking should be no more than a few minutes at gatherings of multiple people and no more than 30 minutes in the case of informational interviews. Keep lunches to an hour.

4. **Demonstrate appreciation.** This becomes more important, the more questions and time you ask of from the person. If you take someone to lunch, get there in advance and let the server know you will be taking the bill. Be creative; maybe you wrote a paper on the challenges facing their industry, or found an obscure website that might relate to something that came up during your conversation.
5. **Hand write a thank you note.** Thank you notes do several things. They set you apart from 90% of individuals who do not send thank you notes. It demonstrates good manners and appreciation, shows follow through, implies your sincere interest in what the individual had to say. Most importantly it gives you a chance to get your character, skills and interests in front of this person.

Example:

Dear Mr. Greenspan,

Thank you for your time last Tuesday. Your information on a career in economics was extremely helpful. Our conversation confirmed this is the career path for me. As you suggested, I have registered to volunteer at our local precinct. Thank you for your wisdom and advice. I'll let you know where I land.

Sincerely,  
Matt Damon

Being a successful networker requires patience, persistence and practice. Remember that you are building relationships over a period of time. Just like friendships, some will come and go quickly and others will stay with you forever. Following the 5 steps discussed in this article will get you off to a great start in building this network!

Good luck!

(Feel free to e-mail me with questions about networking at [laura@smartpeopleworking.com](mailto:laura@smartpeopleworking.com))