

GENERATING NEW NETWORKING CONTACTS

Networking is the name of the job search game. You need to speak with dozens upon dozens of people before you find a job. Where do you find all of those people? Here are some suggestions to get you started.

- **Your Target List:** A target list is simply a list of organizations that you are researching and would be interested in working for. Ideally, your list should have 50-100 companies or organizations on it. Show that list to friends and colleagues and ask them if they know of anyone who works at one of these companies, or someone who may know of contact who works at the company. Do this with enough people, and you will have a good-sized list of new contacts. (See “Networking Scripts” in the Resources section for more details.)
- **Your Target Field:** Tell people the field that you are exploring, and ask them if they know anyone in that field: “I’d like to explore special education as a career, do you know of anyone who teaches special education or who is in the educational field?” If you ask this question of enough people, you’ll get a number of new names.
- **Professional Associations:** If you belong to the Association of Widget-Wingers, or if you want to become a widget-winger, then check out the organization’s website and considering joining the group. Many organizations have member directors that you can access. These groups also host conferences and networking events, many online.
- **Local Chapters:** Many associations have local chapters. If they do, attend a meeting. You can meet your weekly quota of 20 new people from one good networking meeting.
- **Alumni Referrals:** Many colleges and universities maintain a robust alumni network precisely to help graduates with their job searching. Go back to your undergraduate or graduate institution, and ask for their help in putting you in touch with alumni in your field.
- **LinkedIn Alumni Searches:** Another way to tap into alumni networks is through LinkedIn. Search for your college or university and go to their LinkedIn page. Click on the “Alumni” button. You will now be able to search all alumni from your institution by job title, field, or geographic area. Alumni are usually quite willing to help fellow alums, so this is a great resource.

- **LinkedIn:** In addition to alumni searches on LinkedIn, you can search for people who have a certain title, or who work in a specific company. Send a personal request to connect and chat. Recognize that most people won't respond to cold invitations, but some will. You can also ask to join groups that are relevant to your target job or field. Search for a company, title or field, and then click on "Groups."
- **Social Media:** If you are active on social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Clubhouse, Pinterest, etc.—you can identify people to speak with. You may just toss a request up on Facebook: "Hey, looking for a marketing operations job in the DC area or remote. If you know of any marketing operations types out there, I'd love to speak with them." A more personalized approach would be to identify good contacts via their profiles and posts, and reach out to them individually.
- **Professional Networking Groups:** If you do a web search for networking groups, you will find a number of professional networking groups, industry- or profession-specific networking groups as well as listings for networking events, meetups, etc. One of these may be the perfect place to meet people who can help with your job search.
- **Teachers and Professors:** If you aren't too many years out of school, look up a favorite teacher or professor, explain what you are searching for, and solicit his or her suggestions on people you might speak with.
- **Courses, Workshops and Seminars:** Attend whatever classes or workshops are available in your field. Go early to chat with people before the workshop starts. Ask people about what they do, then get a business card and ask if you can follow-up later.
- **Authors or Subjects of Articles:** If you are job searching, you should be reading articles about your industry or field. If someone writes an article or is featured in an article, contact them and ask if they'd be willing to spend 20 minutes with you. People are often flattered that you read the article. And, having just done research on this area, they can usually give you some good ideas.
- **Non-Professional Contacts:** Hairdressers, dentists, doctors, massage therapists, pet sitters, parents of your kid's soccer teammates. All of these individuals have a large number of contacts in many different professions. One caveat about this approach—these need to be relationships of some length, so that the individual has a sense of who you are.
- **Family and Friends.** Often, people close to us have no real idea of what we do or what we are looking for. So it doesn't hurt to check in with your

Uncle Joe to see if he knows any finance/accounting types. He may play golf with someone you'd like to speak with. Cousin Marie may be in a women's book club with some power players. You never know.

- **The Hometown Crowd**: If you are new to the area, reach out to friends and colleagues from your old location. Get the names of anyone that they know in your new location. People are delighted to help you get on your feet in a new town.
- **Do-It-Yourself Networking Event**. Ask a bunch of friends or colleagues if they'd be interested in co-hosting a networking event, either in person or online. Ask each person to invite 3-5 people, depending on the size of the group you are seeking. Structure the event so that everyone gets to meet everyone else, perhaps by rotating small groups around. Give everyone a clear set of questions, so everyone knows what they should ask. You'll meet a bunch of new people, and you'll feel less shy talking about work since that is the stated purpose of the event.
- **Mosque/Temple/Church/Synagogue**: Many religious organizations have formal or informal job networking groups. They are also a good source of diverse contacts. Share your job search questions over the coffee hour, and see what new leads you turn up.
- **Volunteer to Work on an Industry-related Project**. Check with your association or the local chapter to see if there are upcoming conferences or events that they could use help with. In volunteering to help, you will meet lots of new people. Just make sure that the project still allows you plenty of time to job search.
- **Boards of Directors**. Sometimes, checking out who is on a board of directors for an organization will illuminate some possible networking connections. Did one of the directors formerly work at a company where you have a close contact?
- **Job Fairs**. Few people land a job at a job fair, but they can be great places to pick up new contacts. Collect business cards of presenters, and ask if you can call them for further information later. Many will be happy to speak with you. Or just get a list of company reps who were there. Reach out to them on LinkedIn or via email.
- **Former Clients or Customers**: Ask them who in their circle they have been most impressed with and why. Then ask to be put in touch with that person or organization. Calling and saying "Joe Jones said you have the best customer service culture he's ever seen, would you have some time to tell me about that?" is quite likely to get you twenty minutes with a new contact.

- **People Who Have the Job You Want:** You can find plenty of filled jobs, it's the empty ones that are less visible. So go talk to someone who has the type of job you want. They're employed, so you aren't a threat to them. But they may be able to suggest other people that you can talk to. LinkedIn (see above) is a great way to find people who have the job you are targeting.
- **People You Meet This Week:** Anyone you meet this week who is willing to chat is a potential contact. You never know who might be in their circle of contacts.

Is this a lot of work? Yes, it is. But job searching is a lot of work, and talking to people is the most productive way to job search. Not all of these avenues will work for every search, but you can't look at this list and argue that you can't find someone new to talk to. Pick one or two of these and give it a whirl. You are guaranteed to meet someone new!