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NOVA SCOTIA WORKS

# Networking Tips

6950 Mumford Road • Halifax, Nova Scotia • B3L 4W1  
[www.jobjunction.ca](http://www.jobjunction.ca)

Canada

NOVA SCOTIA



## Networking Tips - Outline

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## **WHAT IS NETWORKING?**

Networking is building mutually beneficial relationships with people in order to exchange information and develop contacts. Many people network to meet people who can help them develop their career prospects. But it is as simple as making a connection with someone. Most of us network without being aware of it. Have you ever recommended a hairdresser to a friend or heard about a great new restaurant from a colleague? That is networking! This handout is designed to help show you strategies on how you can improve on your own networking, and make something you already do work even better!

## **WHY NETWORK?**

### **Playing the Odds – Tapping into the Hidden Job Market: It’s Who You Know**

It is estimated that up to 85% of jobs in Nova Scotia are never advertised online. So how are these positions filled? They are filled through word of mouth and networks. According to Workopolis.com, the vast majority of job seekers find their positions via people they know or people they meet. Here are some of the trends they have noticed:

Of the people who have gotten jobs in the last fifteen years or so...

35%	heard about an opening from someone
30%	contacted their present employer directly
14%	answered a want ad
8%	used other methods (e.g., placing ads in career journals, attending career fairs, and mass mailing Résumés)
6%	were referred by private employment agencies
5%	were referred by state employment agencies
2%	took civil service tests

<http://www.workopolis.com/work.aspx?action=Transfer&View=Content/Common/ResourceCentre/career911/networking/NetworkNumbersView&lang=EN> July 2014

\*Note that up to 71% found work through networking in some form or another. These are Canadian statistics, and estimates say that in Nova Scotia the percentages are even higher. It is amazing how many varied job leads you can get from talking to your family, your friends, your neighbor’s, your past coworkers and managers, your dog groomer, the cashier at your local grocery store (the list goes on). Not to mention networking directly with the hiring managers in the companies for whom you want to work.

Jobs posted online can be seen by anyone looking. That means that for every job ad you respond to, you can count on about 100-300 other people applying for that same one position (this number might be slightly higher for entry-level jobs, and slightly lower for highly technical or specialized jobs). Compare that to learning about a job through a network connection; an employer with a sudden job opening, who has used his or her own network might know someone who would fit the job, one lead from a job Seeker (maybe you) who called to set up an **Informational Meeting** (more on this later), two employees might recommend people, and one might be referred from an industry connection. This means that, instead of competing with 300 people for this position, you may now be competing with only 5 or 6 people. Finding out about potential job leads in this way can dramatically increase your odds of success.

### **Build your Professional Reputation**

Networking within your industry allows you to meet the key “players” and position yourself among the industry experts. It allows you to make strong professional first impressions since you are prepared to sell yourself when you meet with them. You have heard the adage “it is who you know that gets you the job, and what you know that lets you keep it”. Increasing your network increases your “who you know” numbers, thereby increasing your odds of career success. Within any industry it may seem like everyone seems to know everyone else. This is especially true in smaller communities like Halifax or even Nova Scotia. So, the more industry connections you can make, the more industry experts you can add to your professional network, the better your chances of being recognized based on that professional reputation you have worked so hard to advertise.

### **Research and Advice**

Appealing to industry experts (for those target companies you have identified) can be a great way to gain useful insights into both corporate culture and specific challenges to the role you are hoping to fill. This will help you market yourself more effectively to your industry or to this specific organization. Use networking to find out about:

- a) How others have successfully gained their first position in your field
- b) Other paths you might consider, similar positions or alternative jobs available
- c) Key skills you can focus on when you are applying for or interviewing for jobs
- d) Local or national industry challenges, problems which you might be able to solve
- e) Specific personal connections to someone who might one day be your boss
- f) Leads to companies who might be hiring
- g) Referrals and introductions to other network connections
- h) Advice on your résumé, how to make it more effective
- i) Courses or training that might be useful

Anything you learn can only help you in your job search. Keep an open mind and be ready to listen to the experts!

## WHO SHOULD I NETWORK WITH?

### **Who or what is a contact? Who or what is a connection?**

**Every person you know** is a contact. Any contact with whom you have created a relationship with can become a connection. A networking connection is a two-way, mutually beneficial relationship, in which both parties offer help and advice to each other within the areas of their respective expertise and/or talents. This might be anything from offering to proofread a cover letter to recommending a great local wine.

Remember, networking is building relationships, and that means staying in touch. You won't remember someone you met once at your cousin's birthday party, but you will remember that person if he/she contacted you a few times after the party. Eventually you will become friends. Networking connections grow and strengthen between people who stay in touch, socially or professionally.

### **People you know**

Every person you know is a contact, so start networking by talking to people you know. When you tell a friend that you are looking for work, and they tell two friends and they each tell two friends, now you have 7 contacts that can be sources of information and help!

Connections clearly help. 70-80% of all jobs are filled by people who heard about a vacancy through a contact. Usually the lead comes not directly from a friend, but from a friend of a friend. So, it makes sense to increase your odds by connecting with as many people as you can.



Start by making a list of your potential connections. These can be organized into 4 categories:

1. People You Know (Family, relatives, friends, neighbors)
2. People in the community (Store owners, acquaintances, club members, coaches)
3. People in the Business (Past employers, coworkers and clients)
4. Other Organization Contacts (Local organizations, associations, religious and community organizations)

Keep this list active, and add names to it as they occur to you. The easiest way to get started is to call people you know well (friends and relatives), so you can practice what you wish to say in your networking calls. You will soon find it easy to branch out to the other contacts you have listed.

## How can Network connections help me?

Your connections can help you in your job search in a number of ways, such as:

- a) Passing on job leads they may hear about
- b) Letting you know if they hear that someone is quitting a job or retiring
- c) Taking your networking card or resumé to pass on
- d) Providing you with useful information, such as names of heads of departments
- e) Talking to their supervisors about you
- f) Telling other people that you are looking for work
- g) Suggesting places you can apply
- h) Introducing you to other contacts
- i) Helping you practice your networking calls

Plan what you want to say before you call. Try to include a few important points:

- State that you are looking for work. Be specific; mention the kind of work you are looking for.
- Tell them your Sales Pitch – give them a statement about your key skills and experience, as they relate to the kind of work you are looking for. Not only will this give you practice with selling yourself, it will help your friends and family better see how they might be able to help you. BE BRIEF; this sales pitch should be around 5-10 seconds!
- Tell them why they are important. List one or two things this person can do for you (from the list above, or any other way you think they can help you).
- Set up a time to call them back to follow up on the “homework” you have given them. It is important and effective to follow up – **You call them back!**

## UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

### Organizing your Search

Random job searching can feel like an overwhelming task! But you can take charge and feel in control if you break the labour market into small, manageable chunks. Use a systematic approach to explore each chunk.

**Step 1 – Clarify your employment priorities:** First, write down your job objectives in order of preference. For example, if you are looking for a position in sales, would you prefer outside sales or retail? Maybe a call centre sales position? Be realistic about your choices. If you do not have a car, perhaps location is important to you. Note this as well; so, for example, your first choice might be a call centre job in Burnside, and a second choice might be a retail sales job in Burnside.

## Networking Tips

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**Step 2 – Research your fields of interest:** explore resources that will help you identify possible fields or industry sectors that match your first choice from Step 1. You might find leads on businesses that match your choices in a number of places, including...

- Yellow Pages
- Employers
- Relatives and friends
- Service Canada offices
- Union hiring halls
- Professional trade journals
- Anyone you connect with; “Can you suggest other places I might call?”
- Professional associations
- Business directories
- Internet (Labour Market web sites or Google)
- Public library

**Step 3 – List employers:** using the above resources. Make a list of all the employers who match your choices. Once you have exhausted your first-choice category, repeat the exercise for your second choice, then your third choice. This will become your networking targets list.

**Step 4 – Start calling:** now is the time to start to build your network! Call your networking targets to set up **Informational Meetings** with the decision makers at those organizations.





### **THE INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

We have looked at the reasons for networking: playing the odds (it's who you know), building your professional reputation, and gathering valuable research and advice. These can all be achieved through meeting hiring managers for an **Informational Meeting**. This meeting gives you a chance to make your first impression face to face with the influencers in your field. It is where the real networking magic happens. This section talks about how to cold call companies to arrange these meetings, what to talk about when you get there, and what to do afterwards.

Your objective is to **meet face to face** with the hiring manager or department lead of the companies you have identified in your “clarify your employment priorities” list. Your script will help you focus your call so that you sound professional and confident. Your script should include:

Greeting by name. If you do not already know from your research the name of the hiring manager, ask the receptionist for the name. Use the name when you speak with this person.

Prepare your Elevator Pitch: This is a BRIEF description of your relevant experience, training and skills.

Ask for a meeting (10-15 minutes) to talk to you. Be clear about why you have chosen them for advice or information. (Tip: avoid “I am looking for a job” at this point; employers want what they can't have, and identifying yourself as a job seeker makes it easy for them to brush you off with “apply online”).



**Prepare an Elevator Pitch for your networking calls**

- 1) **Who are you?** More than simply stating your name, identify yourself within the context of your profession.
  - a. “Hi, my name is Joanne; I am an Executive Administrative Professional”.
  - b. “Hello, I am Eric, a Graphic Artist”.
- 2) **What do you do?** Mention your strengths, maybe your experience and/or training. Think about what makes you stand out in your field.
  - a. “I have over 7 years of experience working with Provincial Government policy evaluation and program development”.
  - b. “My specialty is in 3D animation, developing worldsapes for video games such as Battle Tanks”.
- 3) **What do you want?** Think about your networking goal and why you want to make a connection with this person. Be specific about what your goal is and why you feel networking with you will be a benefit to both of you.
  - a. “I have been interested in Non-Profit organizations such as yours and I would love to find out more about some of the unique challenges you face these days”.
  - b. “I am thinking about expanding into advertising and I think there might be something valuable I can learn from you and from your company”.

**My Elevator Pitch**

Who am I?

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What do I do?

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What do I want?

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### Meeting Checklist

- Do some research and prepare questions ahead of time
- Confirm your appointment and dress appropriately
- Be prepared to listen and take brief notes
- Bring a copy of your résumé

### During the Information Meeting

- Be polite, composed, enthusiastic and professional
- Be a good listener, but share some info about yourself
- Ask for advice, not a job
- Build your network, ask for referrals
- Have a list of questions prepared but be aware of the time. If your time is up and you still have questions you would like to ask, you can request a follow-up meeting.
- Thank them for their time and insight

### The follow up

Spend some time recording, analyzing and evaluating the interview after you leave. This reflection may come in handy later. Always send a thank you note within three days after the meeting.

### Sample Information Meeting Questions:

1. How did you get started in this field?
2. What are the largest obstacles or challenges you face in this industry/position?
3. Who do you think are the recognized leaders in this field, and why?
4. What professional societies or associations would you recommend joining?
5. What is a typical career path for someone coming in at xxxx level?
6. What professional publications would you recommend reading for this industry/field?
7. Which other professionals would you suggest contacting in this industry/field?
8. What are the most necessary skills and qualities required for success in this industry?
9. Do you have a mission statement/values statement? (Only if not available on website)
10. How do you think I could best utilize my degree in this industry/field?
11. What do you consider necessary for someone to make a successful career change in this industry/field?
12. Can I keep in touch with you from time to time? Could I contact you if I have more questions?
13. Can you suggest courses I could take to help me be more competitive in this industry/field?
14. Is my current résumé effective/suitable for this industry/field?
15. Can you suggest other companies to which I might apply?
16. How should I prepare for a job interview in this field?
17. Is there formal on-the-job training?

## **USING EMAIL FOR NETWORKING**

### **The benefits and drawbacks of email**

Email is a convenient and free way to contact potential employers and industry professionals locally, nationally or even internationally. It can be less intimidating to send an email than to make a cold call. However, people can receive many emails each day so you run the risk of your email getting lost in the deluge. Also, email can seem impersonal and it can be all too easy for the receiver to file it away and forget it or even delete it.

### **Writing the email**

When we email friends, it can be fine to use slang, texting shortcuts or casual language, but when you are using email to network it is important to KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL. Use polite, formal language (Dear Ms. Smith), clearly state the reason why you are contacting them, and ensure that you follow up. Your email should be sent from a personal email address (not a business email) but your professional email address should contain your name (employers are much less likely to respond to an email from bighockeyfanatic72@gmail.com than from thomas.jones@gmail.com).

## **USING SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **Why use social media in building your network**

Social media has grown in the last few years to become an important tool for networking. You can connect 24/7, locally and globally, and you can create and maintain an online identity (a brand). You have a good deal of control over what you put on social media so put your best foot forward.

### **Ways to use social media**

If you are beginning a job search, consider reviewing your existing online profiles (start by typing your name into a search engine like Google to see what comes up) and editing any sites to make you seem as professional as possible. Popular social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and especially LinkedIn can expand your network significantly, when used well. Join discussions, or groups within your industry, follow influencers and important stories, stay current with news and trends in your industry, as well as globally.

### **Social Media Networking Do's and Don'ts**

Do post professional links (articles related to your industry, industry events) and pictures.

Don't post anything that seems unprofessional like pictures of you at a party, or negative rants. Consider that this may be an employer's first interaction with you and you wouldn't go into an interview exhausted, dressed for a party and then spend time complaining or talking about your personal problems...so don't do it on social networks.

Do make connections with professionals in your field.

Do be timely with your responses and remember to check notifications often.

