

You are Unemployed – Now What?

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Virtually everyone who becomes unemployed becomes re-employed. Some do it quickly, while others struggle, give up or settle for a position in which they are not happy — sometimes repeating a cycle of short tenures throughout their career. With the right support, many can gain new jobs that are more attractive than what they had in healthier industries. Experience has demonstrated that the longer you are unemployed, the less capable and confident you will be in doing what needs to be done to secure a new job. The key to job hunting success is to be prepared, organized and methodical in networking.

The fundamental objective of the networking process is simple — establish new links with people who can aid in your career development. Only 5-25% of all jobs are advertised. Networking allows you to tap into the 75% of “hidden jobs.” Whether you’re actively seeking a job or trying to stay current with trends and opportunities in your field, networking can expand your pool of contacts. The power of a network lies in its ripple effect; the more referrals you have, the better your position. It’s not just your own contacts who can provide assistance, but people to whom you have been introduced that may know others who can open doors for you.

Not everyone is comfortable with cold calling strangers, so begin building your network with people you know. These individuals can become the basis of your contact list or database. As you gain confidence, branch out by asking to be introduced to those who might help you learn more about your industry or job

opportunities, including potential contacts at meetings and conferences. Remember that consultants, suppliers and vendors in your industry are valuable contacts who are out and about and may have firsthand knowledge of openings. Professional associations are also fertile ground to nurture new relationships and gain industry insights. You’ll find that becoming active, joining committees, volunteering and giving presentations are great ways to meet people.

Whenever you meet or talk with your contacts, respect their time. If you call them, begin the conversation by asking if they have a few minutes to talk, or better yet, schedule a time to talk. Communicate politely and concisely and don’t take more time than you are offered. Ask for names of others to contact; each referral may provide new ways to expand your circle.

Always remember that networking is a two-way street. Successful networking

requires that you increase your visibility and be responsive when others or their friends ask for your help. If someone is referred to you, return their call promptly and be open to a face-to-face meeting. It is the Golden Rule in action — demonstrate the same helpfulness you would like others to extend when you call on them.

Some particular insights about networking are:

- Volunteer with organizations in your community. Volunteering is a common way to make contacts and open your mind to new career possibilities.
- Don’t forget that your church and community groups can be valuable and supportive resources.
- Take action. Don’t sit around and wait for someone to contact you. At conferences, sit with people you don’t know and exchange business cards. Call or email them to reconnect.

- Give and allow others to give to you. Assess your strengths so that you can share your expertise with others. By being a mentor and allowing yourself to be mentored, you can replenish yourself.
- Organize your networking contacts. Use a spreadsheet program on your computer, a binder or a box of index cards to make your contacts easy to access.
- Carry copies of your resume and plenty of business cards to any function you attend. You will maximize the connections you make.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Fear of being perceived as pushy or looking desperate makes many of us wary of networking. However, most people are flattered to be asked for assistance and advice.
- Thank your contacts. Send thank you notes to let them know you appreciate their time and assistance.
- Once you land your new position, let your contacts know. Thank them and send your new contact information.
- Keep networking after you have found a job and don't wait for an urgent need to arise before you tap into your network. Most likely you will need your contacts again. You may also be of service if one of your contacts decides to make a career transition.

Networking is a lifelong process which requires a methodical approach: build your database, clarify your objectives, meet new people, help others and strategically focus on both immediate and long-term professional objectives. It takes time and effort to establish and maintain relationships with contacts, but it can be instrumental in advancing your career.

Locations Nationwide:

Oak Brook, IL	Atlanta, GA	Minneapolis, MN	Philadelphia, PA
Emeryville, CA	Burlington, MA	St. Louis, MO	Pittsburgh, PA
Irvine, CA	Nantucket, MA	New York, NY	Houston, TX
Denver, CO	Bethesda, MD	Toledo, OH	Seattle, WA