

Overview on Networking - Kristen Kenton:

Early in my career as a recruiter, I was exposed to a great coach who told me, "It's not about who you know; It's about who knows you and the stories they tell about you as you've earned their trust." Networking does not have to be daunting if you do it right. It does not mean being a good "schmooser" and it does not always include shaking random hands in a room full of people you don't know. True networking simply involves "warming up" relationships with friends of friends or colleagues of colleagues. The best networkers are often great listeners, as opposed to great talkers. They have clear statements about who they are and what they want and they strive to create mutually beneficial relationships with everyone they meet. This means understanding what unique value you bring to the relationship. It also means that the relationship does not end after the first meeting. Most people are not great networkers because they do not follow up! If you do follow up, it sends the message that the meeting was meaningful and you intend to continue to foster the relationship. If you try to network without a clear plan of action, you may end up as a wallflower, merely watching other people network and wondering why you gave up the time in the first place.

Networking Tips

- Define the skills you and/or your company have to offer and prepare your "self marketing" materials (resume, elevator speech, business cards, etc.).
- When possible, research the list of companies and/or individuals attending the event.
- Utilize tools (LinkedIn, Hoovers, Books of Lists, etc.) to define a connection between your skills/offerings and key individuals attending the event.
- Leverage your personal network to achieve additional information or pre-introductions with key individuals attending the event.
- When uncertain about the dress code, dress as you would for a meeting with a client (business attire).
- Be sure to appear prepared, leave a positive impression, and add value. (Value comes in many forms – market information, introductions to people in your network, etc.)
- Follow up with a short, well written email thanking key contacts from the event.
- Request additional one-on-one meetings when appropriate.



Building Your “Self-Marketing Collateral”

When you’re in career transition, you must create strategies, similar to a business plan, to find the right job. One of the most critical pieces of this process includes creating self-marketing material that will help “sell you” in the marketplace. You are the product in this equation and your materials must be accurate, consistent and compelling. The most important materials to use in a job search include:

Your “elevator speech” (This can also serve as your email introduction)

Your resume

Your one-page “snap shot” (This is a document quickly summarizing where you have been, and where you are going)

It is crucial to develop these materials prior to reaching out to your network/sphere of influence list. Doing so will assure that your message is consistent and your call to action is clear.

Designing your “elevator speech”

Your “elevator speech” should be a short, personal, and specific statement that tells people what you are looking for and what value you bring to the table. It should ask for a specific call to action. For instance, a classically trained CFO that has extensive M&A experience in high growth technology markets wants to work for a small or middle market company in the software space. His “elevator speech” may look like this:

I am a classically trained financial leader with 15 years of experience in technology environments. I have been consistently sought after by CEOs and Boards to transform businesses and profitably grow revenue throughout my career. I am looking for a change-oriented software company looking to grow aggressively through mergers and acquisitions and would appreciate your referrals to local CEO’s in software companies generating between \$10m-\$200m in revenues. Can we talk via phone or have coffee next week?

Breaking it down into smaller pieces:

Sentence one: Help your contact “categorize” you. It might sound negative but most of us want to categorize people and information in order to be more efficient and understand the dynamics involved. If you don’t categorize yourself, you risk your contact categorizing you incorrectly.

Sentence two: Remind your contact what specific value you bring to the market. This statement is how people will remember you.

Sentence three: Tell your prospect, in very specific terms, what you are looking for and how they can help. Most people are too vague because they are concerned with pigeon-holing themselves. Counter intuitively, the more specific you are, the more referrals you will receive.

Sentence four: Call to action (Can we talk via phone or have coffee next week?)

My suggestion is to create three versions of the same elevator speech. One is an email introduction (use bullets; keep it brief), one is your verbal elevator speech



(keep it to less than a minute), and one is a more traditional bio or cover letter format (to send with your resume).

As a recruiter, people often tell me that they do not have preferences when it comes to industry or company size. I really can't help these people as easily as the people who are very specific in their search criteria. There are three major components of a search: **company size, industry, and location**. The more specific people are in terms of their preferences in each of these areas, the more I start to think about *specific* people in my network that will help them. For instance, using non-specific language such as "I am a business consultant looking to build my client base" really isn't leading to action. It is too broad and does not prepare your contacts to think of people that can help you.

Think about your search in terms of concentric circles. The center of the target represents your ideal position and location. Start there. Once you exhaust all of your resources and referrals there, move to the next concentric circle. Maybe this represents a VP-level position in a larger company versus a C-level position. Maybe you would consider other geographic locations. Again, it is important to determine what is necessary, and what is nice to have before you start the search process and reach out to your sphere of influence list.

Writing your resume

This is a controversial topic littered with hundreds of conflicting opinions. As a recruiter, I see hundreds of resumes per week. On average, resumes get less than a 15-second glance at the first screening. Here are some tips to help you stand out:

- Use a traditional, chronological format that does not exceed two pages.
- Start with a Professional Summary (not an objective) that is a modified version of your elevator speech.
- Use bullets (not paragraphs) and leave plenty of white space.
- Use an easy-to-read font (at least size 11).
- Focus on accomplishments versus responsibilities by using numbers, percentages, dollar amounts or other concrete measures of success.
- Seek the help of an expert to write or at least review your resume.
- Do not fall into the trap of constantly re-writing your resume as people provide opinions. Do it once – and right – the first time.

Following your summary statement, your previous experience should start with your most recent position on the front page. Anything beyond 10-15 years should be grouped under "Previous Experience" at the end of your chronological history with minimal information provided outside of the company name, position title, and dates. Remember, your resume should just have enough content to get you an interview, where you can provide more detail. Your education and your community/group involvement should complete the document.

As a way to avoid constantly re-writing your resume, I suggest tracking its performance. In other words, choose a template/format and track the responses. If you feel that you should be generating more activity, change the format and track the performance of that option.



Quick Tips for Maximizing LinkedIn

Making certain that you are easily accessible on LinkedIn will help you build more relevant relationships that lead to desired outcomes. This is particularly important if you are in career transition or proactively managing your career. Here are a few suggestions:

- Make sure your profile is 100% complete
- Obtain & give recommendations
- Optimize keywords that your desired contacts will use in their people search
- Increase your connections (send invitations to all new contacts and existing relationships or click "add connections" and allow LinkedIn to search your email contacts)
- Create a vanity URL
- Add links to website and blogs

More advanced suggestions:

- Reply to a few key polls
- Submit answers to questions or topic discussions
- Join more groups and launch relevant discussions
- Change acronyms to full words/phrases throughout your profile (i.e. "HR" to "Human Resources"). This is particularly important in "Specialties", "Job Title", "Interests" and "Groups and Associations" because these are sections used in keyword searches
- Request recommendations for all previous positions in your career. This has the added benefit of increasing the keyword results
- Add your VisualCV to your profile

