

The Importance of Networking

From *"Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success"* a publication of

US Department of Labor – Office of Disability Employment Policy

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>

"It's not what you know, it's who you know." This common expression is the basis for understanding the importance of networking as a strategy for career development and exploration. Everyone has a network, even if you don't realize it, and when it comes to job searching, this network may be just as important as your skills and experience. A personal network is that group of people with whom you interact every day – family, friends, parents of friends, friends of friends, neighbors, teachers, bosses, and co-workers. With these people, information and experiences are exchanged for both social and potential professional reasons. Networking occurs every time you participate in a school or social event, volunteer in the community, visit with members of your religious group, talk with neighbors, strike up a conversation with someone at the store, or connect with friends online.

When networking for the purpose of career development, this means talking with friends, family members, and acquaintances about your goals, your interests, and your dreams. Most people actually learn about job openings through friends, relatives, or others who are part of their personal network, and because each person in your network has a network of his or her own, your potential contacts can grow exponentially. This is important because more often than not, hiring managers would rather talk to a potential candidate who has been recommended by someone they know or already employ. Even if a position is not currently available, networking can lead to informational interviews that can help you not only learn about possible career paths, but also be great exposure for you to be thought of as a potential candidate when a job opens up. An informational interview is not the same as a job interview by any means, but it is probably the most effective form of networking there is.

To prepare for a networking meeting or an informational interview, it is important to remember the 3 P's...

The Three P's of Networking

(Adapted from *Make Things Happen: The Key to Networking for Teens*)

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/Networking.pdf>

PREPARE: Do what you need to do to get ready. For example:

- To prepare for a telephone call, write a script and practice it. Know why you are calling (have notes). Prepare yourself on how to leave a message if the person doesn't pick up or isn't available.
- To prepare for a face-to-face meeting, do a lot of the same as you would for a phone call. If you're meeting with someone to get information about the work they do or a particular company, visit the company's website (if they have one) to learn more about it ahead of time.

PRACTICE: Practice what you want to say over and over and over. The more you hear yourself say what you want to say, the easier it will be – and the more confident you will feel.

- Ever think about smiling when you're on the telephone? Believe it or not, people can hear that confidence in your voice. People can determine friendliness from the tone of your voice. Along the same lines, fear can be heard over the phone, too. Concentrate on speaking clearly, be calm, and breathe!
- Prepare for one-to-one meetings by practicing with a friend, parent, or someone you know and trust. Ask them to role play with you – they could pretend to be the person you are going to meet with and you could practice asking the questions you have prepared.

Continued on next page...

The Three P's of Networking (cont.)

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER: Part of feeling confident at a networking meeting is feeling good about yourself. If you feel good about your appearance, you tend to give your confidence a big boost!

- Good grooming isn't just for dogs. Don't forget about those day-to-day essentials like showering, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, and using deodorant (this sounds silly, but many adults need to be reminded of this, too!) Don't wear too much perfume or cologne as sometimes people are allergic – and wearing too much will make them remember you because of your smell, not for your skills or your ideas.
- Dress the way you think the other person will be dressing. If you were networking with your uncle at a family BBQ, shorts and flip-flops might be just fine. But if you're meeting with someone in a professional setting, try to find out what the dress code is and see if you can come close to dressing the same (or even one step above). For example, if you're meeting someone in an office, and people usually wear ties, then you should wear a tie, too. If you're going to meet the head of a landscaping company and people usually wear jeans and t-shirts, go one step above and wear khakis and a button down shirt, if you have them.
- Don't forget other important things like a pen and a pad of paper. Your contact might say something really great and you'll want to write it down. It's always a good idea to take a resume with you, even if you're not meeting with someone for a job. It's a good way to leave someone with a reminder of your skills, talents, and experiences. After all, who knows what might happen? Also, ask the person to suggest additional people you could contact to learn more.

Additional Reading

Vox ATL: [Five Networking Tips for Teens](#)

Collegevine Blog: [The Introverts Guide to Networking in High School](#)

Share Your Career: [Career Networking for Youth: How to start and succeed in networking](#)

NOW HIRING! – JOB BOARDS

www.minnesotaworks.net – Minnesota's largest free online job bank. Post your resume and search for jobs by matching keywords in your resume to keywords in job postings. You may also search by occupation/keyword or by location.

www.snagajob.com – search thousands of hourly and part-time jobs by location/zip code.

www.careerrookie.com – look for internships, part-time and entry level careers.

NOW HIRING! – EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

YMCA (multiple locations including West St. Paul, Eagan, Burnsville, Prior Lake, Hastings, and more) is looking for School Age Child Care (SAC) *Lead Program Staff* (minimum age to apply 18) and *Program Staff* (minimum age to apply 16).

Both positions are responsible for planning, leading, and implementing recreational and creative experiences for school age children in a group setting. To learn more or apply online, visit <https://www.ymcamn.org/jobs>.

McDonalds is hiring at multiple locations including Burnsville and Apple Valley for several positions including *Restaurant Crew Person*. Positions and availabilities vary by location. For complete listings, visit www.mcdonalds.jobs.

McDonald's Archway to Opportunity education program provides eligible employees an opportunity to earn a high school diploma, receive college tuition assistance, access free education advising services and learn English as a second language. To learn more, visit <http://www.archwaystoopportunity.com/index.html>.

UPS (Eagan, Shakopee, Prior Lake, Hastings, and more) is accepting applications for *Part-Time Package Handler*, *Package Delivery Driver*, and *Delivery Helper*. UPS provides an excellent employment opportunity for students including education assistance through the UPS Earn & Learn Program. To learn more about these and other career opportunities at UPS, visit <https://www.jobs-ups.com/>.

Panera (multiple locations including Eagan, Burnsville, Apple Valley, and Shakopee) is seeking to hire *Cooks*, *Cashiers* (must be 16 or older to apply), and *Delivery Drivers* (must be 18 or older to apply). To learn more or to apply, visit <https://jobs.panerabread.com/>. Open positions vary by location.

Valvoline Instant Oil Change is hiring *Technicians* in several locations including Apple Valley, Eagan, Rosemount, Inver Grove Heights, and more. No automotive experience necessary. A Technician is an employee in training to become a Certified Technician. Technicians work alongside Certified and Senior Technicians while learning to perform core services such as oil and air filter servicing, grease fittings, lights and wipers, oil changes (as well as other fluids), and tire rotation. To apply, see www.minnesotaworks.net or <https://careers-vioc.icims.com/jobs/intro> for more information.