

The Complete Networking Checklist

Since networking is a long-term set of activities, it's good to check in from time to time. Review how many contacts you've made. 25? 50? 100? Also review how many face-to-face conversations you've had related to your job search.

Consider the following questions. Evaluate your answers and adjust your approach—maybe you're doing too much of one thing and not enough of another?

1. Do you have a contact file for everyone on your A-list?

The contact record contains essential contact information, a priority level for the contact, notes about the meeting, and reminders of commitments made. Here's what a typical record will look like after a networking meeting.

Sample Contact File

Name: *Sam Jaworski*

Priority: *A*

Company/Organization: *Middletown Health Centres, Inc.*

Position: *Director of Information Systems*

Address: *1212 Leslie St, Toronto, ON M1M 1M1*

Phone: *123-456-7890*

Email: *sam@mhci.com*

Referred by/Found by: *Mel Merritt*

Relationship: *Mel and Sam worked together at Memorial Hospital*

What I can do for them: *Share my network; discuss IT trends; refer others*

Date met: *January 16, 2006*

Meeting Notes: *No current positions open, but receptive. Liked my stories. MHC buying long-term care facilities and system integration is his big challenge. Told me to think about BPX certification.*

Follow-up: *January 17/06 call Terry and Supriya (see below). Feb 15/06 – follow-up call referred me to: At MHC: Ken Alderson (Tech Support) and Sally Campbell (HR). George Garibaldi at Bright Systems. Nan Johnson at Solvent.*

I referred them to: *Terry Walker (re: his experience with the people who are pitching Sam on a payroll-tracking package) and Supriya Shah (personal – Sam needs new vet for his three dogs).*

2. Have you organized the information you have collected from notes, phone conversations, and other people’s business cards — at least in some way you can understand?

Effective networking needs organization. Every time you get information from a source, transfer that information onto a contact file. Keep the sheets organized in a file folder or three-ring notebook; you’ll refer back to them often and they should be at your fingertips.

3. Have you actually drawn a picture of at least one web of relationships to see how the connections are made?

Here’s how to draw your first web:

- Write your name in the centre of a piece of paper, and then write the names of three or four people you know (friends, schoolmates, coworkers, etc.) around your name. Connect your name with each person, and note the nature of the relationship.
- Now expand the connection by naming a friend, relative, or coworkers of each friend you listed.
- You should already see some overlap. Now add a friend, relative, or coworker to each of the new names, and fill in every relationship you know.

Draw this web a few times with different names, and you’ll see that you are completely surrounded by connections to potential employers. The first set of people will lead you to the second, and they’ll lead you to another set, and so on. Any of them might connect you to a job or another person who is hiring.

4. Are you prioritizing your contact list?

Go through your list and be relentlessly honest about the quality of each networking relationship. If you see a person who won’t return your calls listed as an A-level contact, change his/her priority to B or C. Also, be honest about old addresses. Some people have a sentimental attachment to old contact information—they keep records of people they haven’t seen in twenty years! If you want to do this, at least put them in a separate category like “Update”. (Track down the person or take him/her completely off your list.)

5. Can you stand up and deliver a personal brand statement?

Your personal brand statement should have the key points you want your contacts to repeat and about 15 seconds in length.

- Start with a single sentence describing what you do (or want to do) for a living.
- Add your best “selling point” as an employee—your best talents, work skills, or outstanding work achievements.
- Explain why you want to connect with other people.
- Ask for referrals to anyone who may be connected to the work you seek.

For example:

“I was a marketing professional for three years in a midsize finance company in Toronto. My marketing programs doubled our market share of the mortgage business. I’ve moved to Chicago for personal reasons. I’m looking for people connected to marketing in finance, banking, lending, and related firms.”

6. Have you offered help to people and then delivered it?

Discard the idea that, because your goal is to get a job, there’s something strictly self-serving about this. It’s fine to expect a payoff for your career networking (a job, a new client, a new opportunity) but it’s not always possible to know what that payoff will be. The highest form of career networking is engagement in the lives of the people in front of you—really listening, really coming to the conversation with good intentions and interest, compassion, and empathy, and really using your creativity and resources to help. Your reputation as a helpful person will always generate new contacts, and networking will organically become part of your life’s work. If you are connecting people effectively, you will inevitably be connected to opportunity by them.

7. Do you have a “networking kit” and routine ways to save information from face-to-face conversations?

Before you go to your first large networking meeting, assemble the following simple networking kit, and keep it handy. It contains things that networking contacts commonly ask for and also information that helps the conversation move forward:

- Clean copies of your resume
- Business cards with phone and email information
- List of specific target companies (places where you think you might find a job)
- List of potential job titles (to help contacts connect you to jobs)
- Several detailed, memorized stories about your work achievements (on index cards, as reminders)
- Professional business outfit for face-to-face meetings
- Pen and pocket-size notebook
- Comb, breath mints, and tissues

Don't forget – before any networking meeting, write down five general questions that interest you (for e.g. why did you choose this career; who is your competition; what's your biggest challenge, etc.) and five specific questions, based on what you know about your contact, their employer or industry.

8. Are you mixing up your activities and sources of contacts—some from friends, some from groups, and some from school or former jobs?

Get out of your box! You've talked to your comfort network—mostly family and friends. You've followed up with referrals. You've met some new people online—but the day comes when you need to find more contacts. Expand your network by joining professional associations, service organizations, local business groups, job-networking groups, and reconnecting with school-based groups.

9. Can you articulate the strengths and weaknesses of your networking style?

See the article [Four Types of Networkers](#) to get a thorough understanding of your networking style.

10. How have you demonstrated your trustworthiness and commitment through your networking behavior?

In a networking relationship, sincerity and reliability create trust. Career networks fall apart because people violate someone's trust, through either insincerity or lack of follow-up. Don't fall into these network-killer traps! Demonstrate sincerity and reliability without fail.

You must be in your networking program for the long haul. If you are committed to building a career network, you'll weave it into your daily life. When you tell someone you'll call next week—call next week. When you promise to refer someone to a new contact, make that referral within twenty-four hours.