

Q&A Column

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Email Subject Line: “Warm” Marketing for Hidden Jobs

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Headline: Networking the “Warm” Way

Summary:

I tend to be shy and it may be holding me back in my job hunt. People keep telling me to make new connections. But I am not comfortable with making “cold” calls. Is there a better way?

Margaret C., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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Headline: Networking the “Warm” Way

Dear Mark,

I am told that I can be kind of shy and I am wondering if this is holding me back as I look for a new job. People keep telling me that I have to break out of my shell. They say I need to make new connections. Truthfully, I am not very comfortable with this idea. The thought of making cold calls (picking up a phone and talking to strangers) is bad enough, but to talk to them about giving me a job? Now way! Do I really need to go this route? And if so, how?

Margaret C., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dear Margaret,

The people advising you are right about one thing: if you want to find work faster, you do need more contacts. The process used most commonly for this is “networking.”

Essentially it works as follows. You start by drawing on the people you already know. They refer you, selectively, to people *they* know. And while you’re going about this, you eventually hear about work opportunities before they ever get advertised. You end up in the right place at the right time - and you may not have to compete with hundreds of other job seekers.

If you’ve never done this formally before it may sound a bit, well...strange. After all, why would anyone new want to meet you or help you find work? Read the example below and see what it’s all about.

Elena, 44, was about two months away from having her job disappear. She’d been on contract for two and a half years as a research assistant in a medical laboratory. She was very worried: she’d spent so much time reviewing experiment results that she barely knew anyone outside her department. Sure she’d been applying for ads on the job boards. But so far no luck. Who could she possibly network with at this point to tap into hidden opportunities?

As it turns out, simply by talking to her friends about her concerns and goals, Elena started the ball rolling. One friend mentioned that her aunt happened to be a senior nursing supervisor at the big hospital nearby. The friend quickly introduced Elena to her aunt. (Back to this in a minute). Elena also contacted her own laboratory supervisor, a respected member of the local science community. He was only too happy to introduce his dedicated assistant to several of his colleagues, all of whom worked in established positions for reputable science and healthcare organizations.

Now back to friend's aunt that Elena ended up meeting with. The aunt was so impressed with Elena's drive, knowledge and enthusiasm that she gave Elena the name and number of a close friend who was heading up the research department at a pharmaceutical firm in the city. He agreed to meet Elena for a half hour one morning about two weeks later. Again she made a great impression and he in turn spoke about her briefly to one of the managers that reported to him – a manager who had just that week received a budget increase and needed a new lab assistant. Guess who got asked in for an interview before anyone else?

Could be that this sounds like a whole lot of running around to make yourself known to others. In fact, it is. Notice, though, that Elena never made a single "cold" call. Instead she leveraged the goodwill of people who referred her on to others. That's why she received a "warm" reception. Not every time, mind you. But enough so that she got to meet with decision makers at places that were hiring. That's what networking's about. So don't forget that you never know who knows whom – until you ask!



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