



CHAPTER

16

# NETWORKING SEARCH STRATEGIES:

**Networks – Infosearch – Network Partners**

**Who should I contact?**

The approach you use for achieving your short-term goals must be based upon a solid understanding of the employment world in which you must operate. There are many innovative and exciting things you can do to make the system work better for you.

How you choose to utilize the employment system determines the degree of your success. You can enhance your success by creatively managing circumstances. How can you use “networking” on your way to job search success?

## A Creative Search Strategy

*Your immediate goal is to create a plan for getting you the right type of job interview*

An effective job search requires the development of a strategic plan. A strategic plan is a three to five year, systematic, and logical approach for achieving a pre-planned objective. Where do you want to be working within the next five years?

Strategic job search planning establishes a pattern of behavior that will ensure your successfully reaching your goal. That goal is to obtain as many job interviews as it is physically possible for you to conduct.





Strategic planning looks at the big picture. Achieving a short-term goal insures the greater possibility of achieving the long-term goal of job satisfaction and career advancement. Most job interviews come as a result of your networking efforts.

As employers screen cover letters and resumes, what factors do they use for deciding who they want to interview? Past performance as highlighted by significant achievements is one important factor. Your education, skills, and abilities can point to the fact that you are capable of doing the assignment for which you are applying.

In spite of your other assets, however, one thing can shine above them all. *Motivation* ranks higher than anything else in an employer's mind as a predictor of performance on the job. You can have the strongest credentials in the world and yet not be *willing* to work hard.

Willingness to work. Attitude. Outlook on life. How is an employer ever going to measure those elusive qualities? There are no psychological tests that measure them accurately and confidently.

What do other people say about you? How do people describe your willingness to work? How do people talk about your attitude? What other people say about you *is* important!

Competence is important, too, but the proper attitude with less competence may still get you more interviews and job offers. Hard work can make up for a lack of competence. Ideally, superior competence and proper attitude come in the same package.

An employer is definitely influenced by what others say about you. Other people can open the door for you. Think of the doors that you have personally opened for others. Opening doors is fun and rewarding, and other people enjoy helping you.

Employers hire successful people that they personally know. Even when people who have the "right" qualities are not totally successful, employers prefer to hire them if they know and like them. Hence, *liking you* is an important attitude that you must create in the employer's mind.

When employers do not know job candidates, they must turn to people they know and trust. Employers often ask their friends who they know with credentials appropriate for the open position. Relying on recommendations from friends (or employees) is the number one way employers fill jobs.

Many people know you. They are the people who count. They are important because employers will listen to them. They may be "high brows" or "low brows," executive-level or lowest-level. Your network contacts are the folks on whose opinions an employer relies.

Never underestimate the power of people you know! They will always be your greatest asset.



## Contact Networks

A network of hundreds of people is waiting to go to work for you. Who are they? They are people who know and respect you.

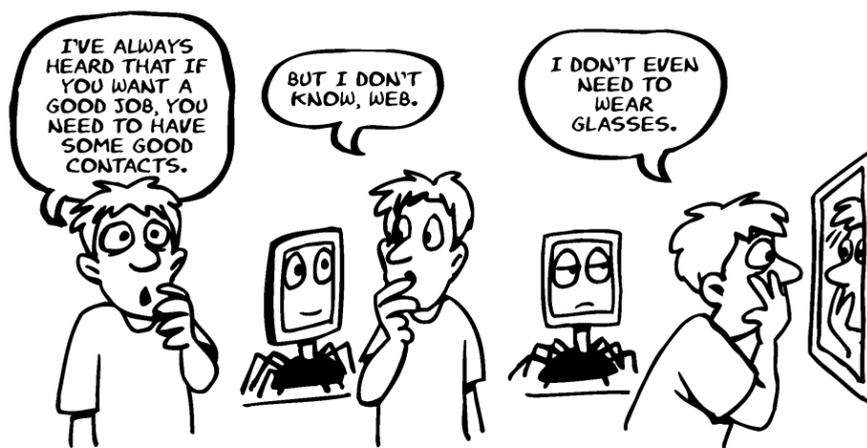
The most effective job search technique never had to be invented. It is human nature. It is human nature to want to help others, so you only need to learn how to help others help you.

What people say about you impacts getting job interviews.

Other people open doors for you by touting your motivational qualities.

It is who you know that counts!





Recommendations  
create job interviews.

You have to let others know of your situation and then let human nature take over. People naturally exchange information about other people. It is fun. Use this to help yourself. These people won't ever charge you a fee for helping you, either. They will do it for free because they like you.

Now, there are a few selfish folks in this world, but their numbers are small. All you have to do is deal with your warm, loving, kind, normal, everyday fellow human being.

It is also human nature to talk about jobs. When people hear about an opening, they immediately try to think of who they know that would be "good for that job." Many kind people, when they learn of your situation, will go out of their way to ask others if they have "heard of anything" for a nice person like you.

Get known by  
people who are  
willing to work  
for you.

You are probably saying that it is not that simple, and you are right. Job opportunities given to you on silver platters are not worth any more than the time it took for you to get them.

People whom you have not met cannot like you. People whom you have not met cannot recommend you. It behooves you, therefore, to get out and meet people.

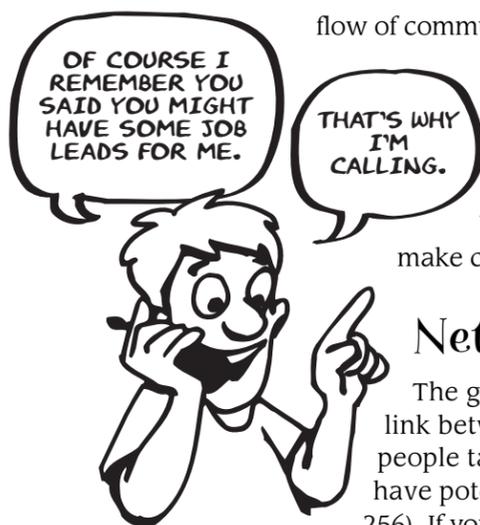
Meet people!

Meeting people is often difficult. A very few of us feel we have "too many" friends and acquaintances. So you probably need a "system" for meeting new people and making new friends. That is where the network idea comes in.



## Network Concepts

A network is a series of interlocking connections. Have you ever heard the word *connections* before? Connections facilitate the



Over 80% of job openings are never formally advertised!

Your acquaintances are your personal sales force to manage.

Create your own network contacts.

flow of communication. They make commerce successful and stimulate trade. Connections can shrink the whole world into somewhat of a small community.

You need connections! A network provides those connections. A properly constructed network directly touches thousands of lives. Many of these people can work for you. You need to develop a personal network over time that will make connections for you.

## Network Power

The geometric concept is what makes networks so powerful. Each link between two people creates a geometric expansion. If those two people talk to two people and so on through only four sequences, you have potentially shared your situation with 256 people ( $2 \times 2 \times 4 \times 16 = 256$ ). If you share your concerns with 100 people, the potential magnitude of your network is staggering to consider.

This contact network operates on the same principle as the chain letter. It can and does break down at certain points. Nonetheless, whatever action is generated produces good. The "power network" is a win-win situation. You cannot lose by employing it.

You can repair broken links. All you have to do is prepare a routinized follow-up system. Each follow-up contact restores the potential of the geometrically expanding contact network. The odds of its breaking down the second time are smaller, and you will have enhanced the value of your relationship with contact.

## Connections

Contacts are your connections and they are participants in your job search strategy. Your initial contacts are your family, relatives, personal friends, general acquaintances, teachers, and work associates.

These contacts are not necessarily in your job lead prospect file. They may eventually become part of that powerful and influential group, but you are not yet at the job contact phase of career planning. You certainly do not want to employ a search technique that immediately starts twisting the arms of those people who are closest to you.

Your next interview may well result from a contact of a contact that you do not even personally know. Most employers interviewing you may not know you and the person that recommended you may not know you either. People rely on the opinions of their friends



## Network Development

Your first task is to build a strong network of contacts that can be relied upon to work with you. You start this by personally contacting every person close to you.

Contacting people requires a motive. Your motive is not to ask your contacts for a job. A job interview is your ultimate goal, but before you can begin working toward that you must have a network of contacts.



### Networking Creates Lifelong Mentors

Networking is an extremely powerful concept. The number of lives that can be touched in the network concept is geometrically expanding. Word of mouth publicity is extremely effective, highly credible, and long living.

Any job search strategy is a long shot. You must be at the right place at the right time with the right credentials. Some would argue that a successful search takes a lot of luck. Yet, the number one method used by employers to source talent is referrals and recommendations.

The informational interview is often used in reestablishing contact with network participants. Although the expressed purpose is to gather information, the main thrust is simply to renew acquaintances and advise of the new status. The interview is not an informational exchange or a job interview.

The purpose is to renew the relationship or create a new one. The goal is to develop lifelong mentors. This is not a one night stand that uses people indiscriminately. A well-developed network represents a smooth functioning set of mentors who may not even know each other. The network is held together by the word "thank you."

The mentors serve as counselors, peers, colleagues, confidants, and resume referral agents. It functions as both a sales force and a personal support group for you. The dynamic mentors serve when needed.

### Network Contact Card

Create your list of network partners.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last date contacted: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

Next date contacted: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Purpose/Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Date prepared: \_\_\_\_\_

Use a database such as Outlook contacts.

Figure 16.1



Your first step in developing this network of partners is to map out your strategy for creating contacts and write it down. Your strategy for contact creating is just as important to you as your personal contacts. You are not likely to know the person who recommends you for an interview. The connection may result several levels from your immediate circle of friends. This concept has worked for centuries!

### **New Personal Contacts.** To create personal contacts you need to

be involved. Be a person who gets involved in activities for the enjoyment of meeting others. For an activity to be successful and enjoyable, pick activities in which the people in attendance at the function or activity have interests similar to yours.

Developing these personal contacts should not be a casual operation. There are valid career-related reasons for making these relationships stable. You want the friendships you make to stand the test of time. The generation of contacts is not a short-term strategy for finding a job. It is a lifetime endeavor in a field in which you and others have common interests.

Career progression and career management depend upon other people. The most expedient way of burning important bridges is having people discover that you are using them. Developing personal contacts should be a long-term, life-enhancing experience that will benefit you and your circle of friends for many years. You are more likely to help others more than they help you. But in a crisis, your network partners will produce results for you.

Networking is a long-term strategy for career development.

Your professional colleagues want to work for you.

**Professional Societies.** Professional societies bring people of like career concerns together. Engineers, educators, scientists, salespeople, retailers, and practically every other occupation has such a society.

Most societies have local chapters as well as regional and national groups. Getting to know your work colleagues is one of the best career advancement insurance policies you can purchase. Career and life go together, and members of these groups usually strongly support one another.

If you are not involved in this type of professional organization, you should seriously consider joining one or several. More than just joining, you should try to get involved in a leadership capacity. Your professional association is career insurance.



**Social Organizations.** Social organizations are clubs. Join and participate in as many *special interest networks* (SIN) as you can. College alumni groups are often some of the most active. These "SIN" groups become valuable to the extent that you get well known. If you can become a leader, the values increase significantly.

There are some very exclusive social clubs like yacht clubs, country clubs, athletic clubs, and similar groups. Being part of these "in" groups can open an amazing number of doors. It is expensive to join and maintain membership in most of these groups.

**Developing the Network List**

- Family relationships
- Work colleagues
- College classmates
- Friends and acquaintances
- Association acquaintances
- Social organizations
- Fraternal organizations
- Civic and political groups
- Job fairs

Figure 16.2

Some very popular social clubs are springing up in the form of sporting clubs. There are aerobic, tennis, racquetball, bowling, swimming, handball, etc. groups that are perfect for many people. Many of these have pairing programs for matches and meets that make getting acquainted very natural. Remember, you are there to help others as much as you are involved to help yourself. The "SIN" groups can be extremely helpful in your long-term career advancement.

**Service Clubs.** Nearly every city has numerous service organizations that are always seeking to recruit new members. The fellowship in these is enjoyable, and the projects they carry out are rewarding to the community. Because these organizations often meet over a lunch or dinner hour, the necessary time commitment for them is minimal. You are there to help others. As you contribute

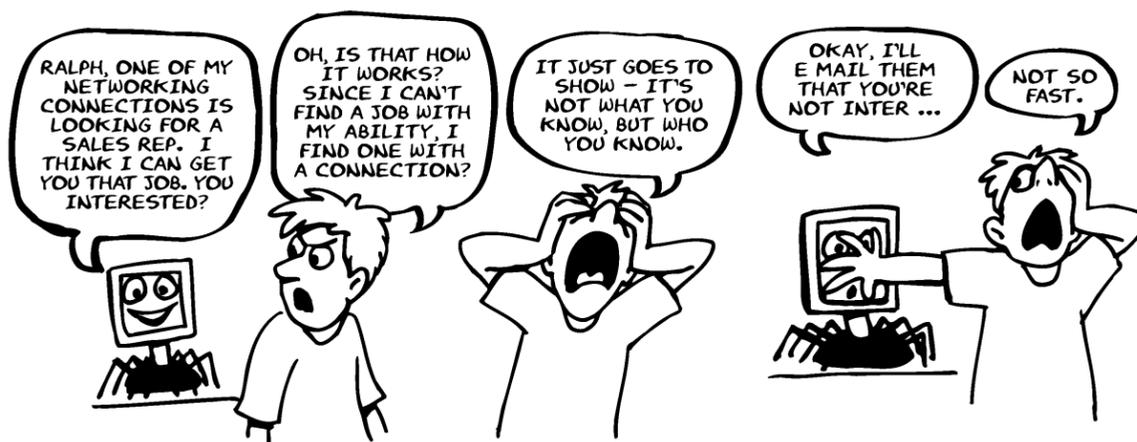
over time, you will discover that rewards, careerwise, help everyone. The network is not your main objective but it does facilitate career interests.

**Religious Institutions.** Churches and synagogues bring people together to worship, but more than any other type of group they inspire friendship. Most churches have many programs outside the normal worship period.

Religious groups have a mission of helping others. Although the members' career advancement is hardly ever one of their primary stated missions, the fellowship that evolves in religious settings makes for strong friendships and thus contacts. The secret to networking is to be involved so others can get to know you well. You do not need to do anything special. Serving others serves yourself.

## Network Maintenance

People networks are not developed solely for job search reasons; their friendship extends far beyond career concerns. Nonetheless, networks can greatly aid careers. Some good motives have a natural way of spinning off other good motives.





*Keep your friends and acquaintances in your network in touch with your current job plans.*

Networks die if they are not nurtured. They do not demand a lot of care to remain healthy and viable, but some care is necessary. People like to hear from you and to hear that you are doing well.

This talk of nurturing may sound extremely self-serving, but friendships and people networks are mutual associations. Each party enjoys and grows just as the other does. This is just simply human nature in action.

Keeping friendships and other contacts current is a relatively simple task. It means having lunch with old friends occasionally. It means exchanging holiday greetings. It means small courtesies that show you care about each other in a sincere way. Caring about others has a strong result in helping yourself if you ever need help from your circle of friends. An electronic contact list, like "Outlook," can be a very valuable tool for you to use in maintaining your network partners.

## Using Networks

Your network is a precious asset because it is made up of people who know you and respect you. You help them and they help you. Part of this helping is understanding each other's concerns, and a career concern is a very important part of life. Ordinary, friendly people who know you best are the ones most likely to help you the most.

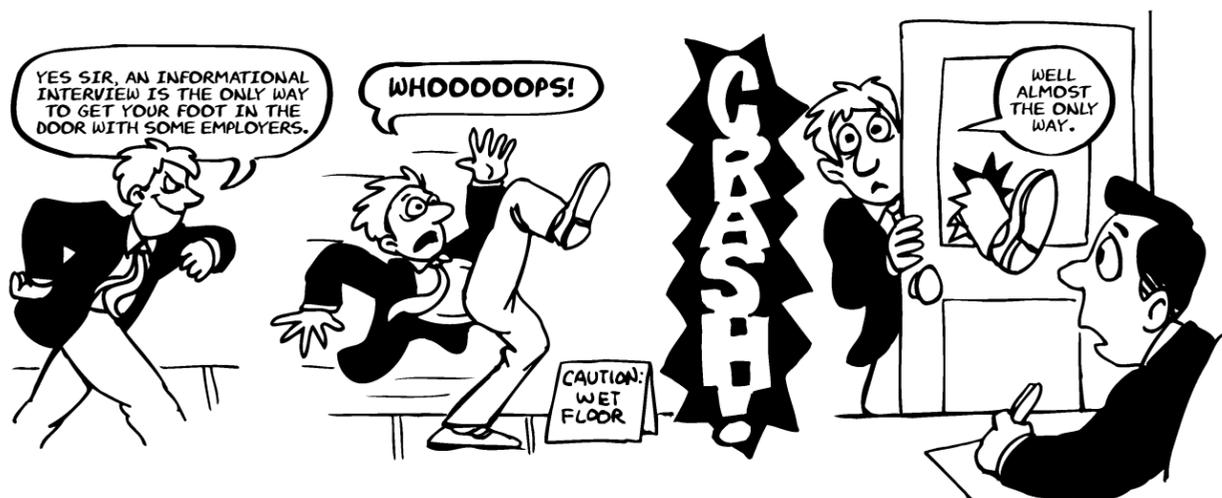
You do not necessarily go to your friends when you need a job. Chances are that they are not in positions to give you a job anyway. But they are usually in touch with people who can help.

There is some therapy involved in talking to your friends about your career concerns. That aspect should not be minimized. Help your relationships mature by staying in touch regularly, not just when you have an issue.

You must become known by people who count in the job world. Your network breaks into that huge reservoir of hidden jobs.

Going after job interviews is hard work. It is often mentally depressing. Receiving turndown after turndown without so much as getting a formal job interview is ego-deflating. This is where your network partners can come to your aid.

*Your network is your entry into the hidden job market.*



## Networking Builds Relationships

### Who Are Your Network Partners?

Developing a network support system is a process that should continue throughout your life. It is important to develop these support networks for the purpose of job searching, but it is a far broader goal to establishing lasting bonds. In more cases than not, in the final analysis you may be the person helping others most frequently.

Networking is a mutual helping concept, not a one-way street. Your network participants may not be your best friends but they are good acquaintances who over time can help improve your station in life. As you grow in your career, you, in turn, should be of assistance to others in the group or who might subsequently join your groups.

The network participants are your private sales force. As your ambassador, they are willing to take action to advance your career. Unfortunately, the network is an indirect entry or re-entry into a new job and thus a slow process. If you employ this approach, plan several months ahead.

Networking is a two-way street. It is a dynamic use of relationships for both personal and professional growth. This partnership arrangement is a creative, "right brain" strategy that occasionally might deviate from accepted norms.

The primary objective in networking is to become better known so that you will be referred for jobs often. Your network representatives have a genuine concern for your interests and identify with your concerns. Since you are not requesting a job, there is no negative turndown, and there is a positive feeling about your interest in them.

Can you quickly identify and contact your network partners within one day? Microsoft Outlook can help you! Stay organized.

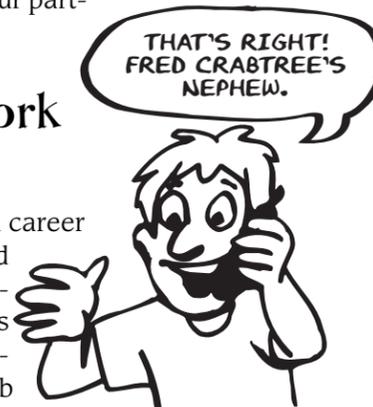
Your network  
opens doors

You need information. You need advice. You need to open some doors. Many avenues to job interviews are not as simple as might first appear. Waiting and hoping for the right opportunity to come along or be advertised somewhere is often futile. You must start to make things happen. If you employ the network partners concept, you may never have to job hunt again.

Your network partners create action. Job leads start to hunt your talents! The headhunters start to call you because your partners are recommending you.

### Career Fairs Create Network Contacts

One of the best ways to network is to attend career fairs, especially the university-sponsored events. Sometimes you just need a single contact to get your foot in the door. Organizations like to use the job fair concept because it provides exposure without a formal, legal job





interview. Employers avoid saying “no, not qualified” and build a lot of potential candidates for interviewing when the timing is right.

**Networking Goals.** Job fairs provide the entry crack in the door that you often need. It is much easier to network and conduct informational interviews when you have an inside contact who is interested in exploring a job possibility with you.

A job fair contact is usually only a networking lead generator. Rarely are these short encounters at a table or booth equivalent to a job interview. They are sample introductions that lead you to network, which will eventually lead to a job interview.

Job fairs produce more than cold contacts. Most employers are not there for “public relations purposes.” They have or anticipate having job openings and are doing a preliminary screening at the job fair. Be prepared for this qualification screen. Don’t view it as a casual conversation even if the recruiter makes it seem like a pleasant conversation.

**Tell Me about Yourself.** Do you have a 60 second commercial about yourself? You have only a few precious minutes as the recruiter shakes your hand, chit-chats, and moves on to the next candidate. You do not want this nonprivate setting to turn into a selection interview. Off-the-cuff comments rarely reveal your greatest potentials. You need the well-rehearsed, polished approach in the formal behavioral-based interview that is almost always required in any organization’s selection process.

You need to deliver one or two memorable sound bites about your credentials. The news media calls these “teasers.” Why would I want to see you again?

How can you best wet the appetite? “Let’s get together later” is your goal. Deliver a convincing short commercial and move on. The value in a job fair is in making a brief encounter. Your goal is not a long unplanned conversation. The recruiter is simply getting enough information to close you out of further concession or screen you into a follow-up interview.



**Advance Plan.** A career fair is not a walk-in and “mill-around” program if you expect it to meet your goal of making new networking contacts. You need a plan before you enter the large arena.

Which employers interest me? Where is their table located? Have I visited their website before I approach them? You want to look knowledgeable about the firm and the job opportunity. The organization is probably using this as a preselection tool for scheduling interviews.

Your level of interest shown is an important selection variable. Do your research on every job and organization that is of interest to you. Don’t use this encounter as your first research effort.

Your resume is your calling card. Have several targeted versions ready to hand out. You may give a different version to some employers than you give to others. Your career objective points out that you are the perfect candidate for that organization or that career field.

Create a list of questions that you will ask. Your questions, with a short rehearsed premise, delivered before you ask the question, tells why your ques-





tion and the employer's response is important and reveals your very high level of interest in the employer's opportunity. Don't try to improvise your questions at the site. You want to appear to be a well-organized person. To do that, you need to have an advance plan. Planning precedes success!

Regardless of what you have been told about dress, the best advice is to always dress professionally. How will you be dressed if you accept this job? That is the best way to dress for the job fair even if it seems out of place with the other job applicants competing for the recruiter's attention. There is nothing wrong with being overdressed. The professional dress, even if defined as "business casual," is never inappropriate, whereas being even one notch underdressed can damage your greeting.

**Peer-to-Peer Networking.** Many other fellow job-seekers and networkers at the fair can also become part of your networking pool. Impress them when you can. Others know people who know others. Peer-to-peer networking is also highly successful. Everyone at the job fair is there to network. Some are already in your profession and are there to climb a bit higher.

Your peers may even be in a position to introduce you to others that they already know. Even at the college job fairs, it is not unusual for students to be helping other students. Campuses are large. You need new contacts. Some students have had internships and are there for renewing acquaintances with former employers. Never underestimate the power of your peers in networking facilitation.

**Avoid Selection Interviews.** You need "quality time" and the recruiter wants to give you quality time later on. Seldom is the recruiter's purpose to hire you at the job fair. They are in a preselection mode most of the time. Make your best shot and move on to the next booth after leaving your well-prepared resume behind.

Get a business card. The next contact is often up to you!

Don't wait for a "no interest" or "no reply" response. Take the initiative. It is nearly impossible for the recruiter to make enough notes and fairly evaluate the large number of candidates that they will see at the job fair.

This is a **networking event** not a hiring hall.

You should be the "screener." "Is this a firm that I want to work for?"

**Collect Information.** Ask questions! Have a list of questions in mind. Ask more follow-up questions. Nothing shows more interest from you to the recruiter than the number and quality of your questions. Other than your "commercial," your goal is to collect information that you can use in the subsequent selection interview.

It is usually not wise to interview on the spot. If they do start asking you "interview questions," reply with your





previously prepared situational stories about your past work or educational experiences. Read the chapters on interview techniques and draw on those concepts as you reply. Try to close the “interview” quickly by asking for an appointment time later.

Your questions give you more information that you will use later as you prepare for a patterned and structured interview at the employer’s facility if invited for a further interview. Do not try to peak too early.

**Follow-up.** In many situations, even when the recruiter told you that you would be contacted within two weeks, you will not be contacted. Immediately, send a thank you for the time that you shared at the job fair. If appropriate, attach your resume to this e-mail. A well-planned cover letter, whether asking for a job interview or informational interview, is always appreciated. Reminders show interest, refresh positive memories, and invite action on the part of a busy person.

**Job Fair Schedules.** Your college career service office (CSO) is your best source of job fair schedules in your geographical location. Even if the University is not sponsoring an event, if it is relevant, the sponsoring organization will almost always send a notice to your CSO. Your CSO web site will post the schedule and usually have a list of participants. Job fair schedules often get filled the last few days before the event so expect to see employers at the fair that were not on the original list.

Many job fairs are local and may be sponsored by an association, a Chamber of Commerce, or third party wishing to make a profit. Many are sponsored by student organizations on college campuses. Also, check out the job fair listing on [www.jobweb.org](http://www.jobweb.org).

**Career versus Job Fair.** A distinction should be made between a “career fair” and a “job fair.” Career fairs were originally started by colleges where freshmen and sophomores could come and schmooze with career practitioners. The word “job” was not used because it was a career orientation gathering where the only job possibilities were internships, cooperative education, or part-time jobs. This distinction has blurred in recent years.

Your CSO can help you determine whether the event is career exploration or job oriented. Whatever version is offered, your main goal is to develop contacts. You should view all career and job fairs as “networking” events. They are not solely “exploring my career options” and they are not solely “job hiring halls.”

You need to meet people, collect contact information, and follow-up with a job interview request at some future date. An e-mail or telephone call should be used to set up a future appointment. Be assertive.



**Locating Fairs.** Another great resource for identifying job fair locations and data is a website hosted by the CSO professional association called the **National Association of Colleges and Employers**. Most CSOs report their job fairs to this organization who in turn post these on the web site for students to use, called [www.jobweb.com](http://www.jobweb.com), which is listed, along with others, below. You may have





attended a university or college in a location that is different from the location where you prefer to work. Many colleges will allow you to attend their job fair on a reciprocity basis. Some even invite the public to attend. Check with the host college by e-mail if you wish to attend. Attach your resume. You will find a contact address on the **www.jobweb.com** website.

There are several professional associations, trade groups, and other private organizations to operate job fairs. Many of the job boards will link you to these. The search engines like **Yahoo** and **Google** will also list these. Listed below are a few of the many websites that provide job fair services.

A brief review of the splash pages will tell you if there are fairs that are appropriate for you. **Jobweb** gives you a list of career fairs sponsored by universities.

Career fairs are a very important part of your networking activity. Use them wisely as you create your career planning strategies.

#### **JobWeb**

**www.jobweb.com**

The JobWeb site has evolved into a robust, all-inclusive resource. Click on the JobWeb logo to open a page FULL of links to specialized portions of the site including: Online Career Fair, Resumes & Interviews, Career Development (which contains assessment and exploration tools), Internships/Co-ops, Salary Info, Job Market Research, and After College. It contains a tremendous amount of career information so if you can't find what you're looking for, use the "Search JobWeb" feature.

#### **Career Conferences of America**

**www.careerconferences.com**

CCA brings employers and students from every conceivable industry and background together to meet and interview face-to-face. CCA's college recruitment conference program is different from other career fairs because students attend by invitation, which are extended to students whose background, interests, achievements, and qualifications best match the requirements of participating employers. And because participating students are of such high-caliber, employers make a significant commitment to the success of our programs. The end result is a focused recruiting event, which sets the stage for very positive connections and interviews between students and employers, and leads to a high level of success for both groups. As a result of its successful undergraduate recruitment program, CCA has developed a number of other recruitment programs. CCA currently produces "The Career Forum for Women and Minorities" and "Careers 200X."

#### **Career Gardens**

**www.careergardens.com**

EMDS is a top-class recruiting firm. For the candidate looking to maximize his/her potential and begin or develop an international or local career, EMDS can, and consistently does, make this happen. They have over 80 Forums worldwide each year, year-round job opportunities through a "search and selection" function, and on-line job applications





with over 600 widely respected, international companies. Most of these job fairs are in Europe.

#### Career Fair

[www.careerfair.com](http://www.careerfair.com)

This site contains dates and detailed information on all the upcoming career fairs. Careerfair.com can also put you in touch with hundreds of hiring companies recruiting for thousands of current job openings for professionals like yourself. By simply posting your resume, recruiters can search the database containing your resume to find qualified candidates for current job opportunities.

Job fairs are an important part of your networking strategy. Use them wisely by planning your techniques before you arrive.

## Informational Interviews (Infosearching)

Avoid the “no” word!

The word “no” is an extremely damaging word. The traditional job search strategies invite potential employers to say “no.” How can you get away from the negative syndrome and into a more positive environment?

You must remove yourself whenever possible from the negative world. Your network partners help you do that by offering to speak positively on your behalf.

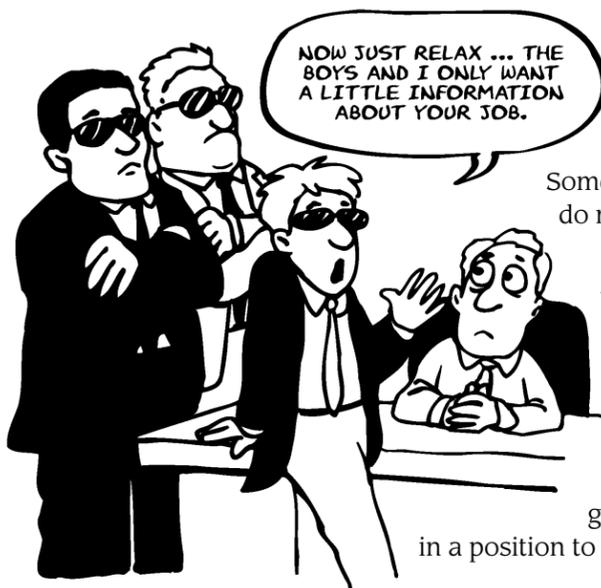
Your goal should be to avoid getting yourself into a situation that calls for a firm “yes or no” decision. The type of decision required after a job interview is a “yes or no” response. Some decision situations are unavoidable, but you can avoid many of them.

Many people get turned away before they ever get to the interview stage. You can avoid much of that negative environment. In negotiation strategy, you are taught to avoid the yes/no conflict.

The secret is to avoid putting others in the position of having to give you a negative decision. You accomplish that by avoiding the job interview until you firmly know that a job exists for which you are well qualified.

You rarely ask your network partners directly for a job. You invite them to help you in the job search process, which they rarely will refuse to do. Some partners may not work hard on your behalf, but they do not have to tell you “no” either.

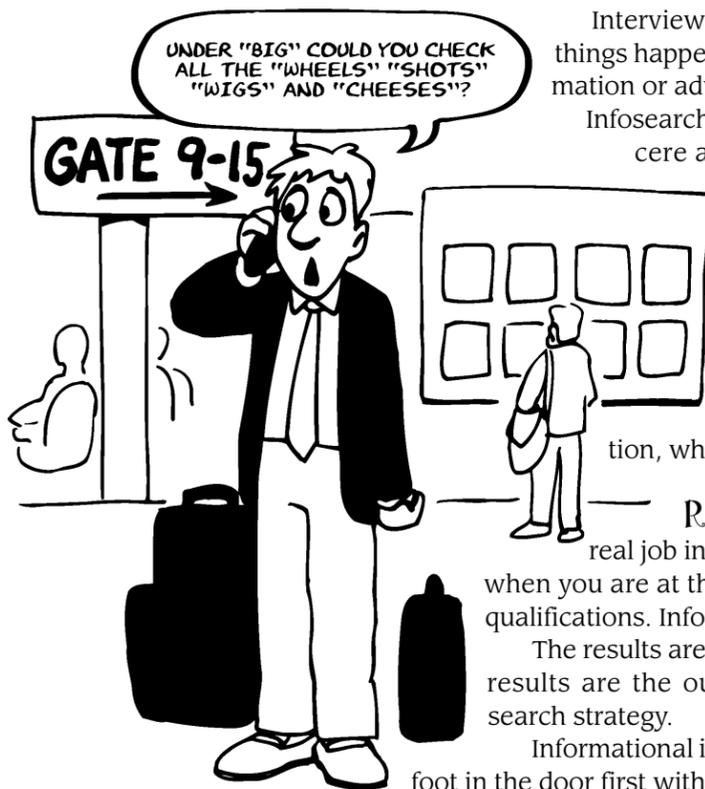
Informational interviewing makes important things start to happen for you.



**Network Growth.** Your goal is to get your name passed along to others in a positive manner. You expect them to describe you as a highly motivated, hard-working person with some excellent job skills. If they cannot do that, they will politely not speak negatively on your behalf.

Interviewing for information is another way to gently add to your network. You select people who are in a position to help you in your job goals if they elect to do so.





Interviewing for information (“infosearching”) makes things happen. You might not believe that you need information or advice, but ask for it anyway.

Infosearching is a basic employment strategy. It is sincere and honest. It accomplishes things that job interviewing has no chance of doing.

You interview when you know a job exists. The goal of interviewing is to obtain a job offer.

The goal of the info interviewing is to collect information. It is a preliminary step to job interviewing. Interviewing begets job offers. Infosearching shares information, which may lead to future job interviews.

**Results.** Infosearch indirectly produces the real job interviews that you need. Job interviews result when you are at the *right* place at the *right* time with the right qualifications. Infosearching produces the right situations.

The results are not accidental, nor are they due to luck. The results are the outcome of a carefully orchestrated career search strategy.

Informational interviews do not produce job offers. Get your foot in the door first with this strategy.

## Infosearch Objectives

*Infosearching puts your foot in the door!*

*Infosearching is your most important job search strategy.*

The purpose of infosearch is a two-way sharing of information. You need information to gain new facts and to confirm your views about your career goals. Infosearch is a real-world feedback system that gives you a chance to reassess your basic career objectives that emerged from your earlier self-assessment and career exploration. Infosearch data helps you clarify and further specify your career plans based upon some real world input.

Infosearch, when followed out according to a plan, will greatly expand the size of your contact network. As the infosearch process systematically and continuously progresses, more and more people become involved in your network.

This networking process will eventually become the base of your operations for obtaining specific job leads. Once you have firm job leads, you can gear up for an altogether different approach to interviewing.

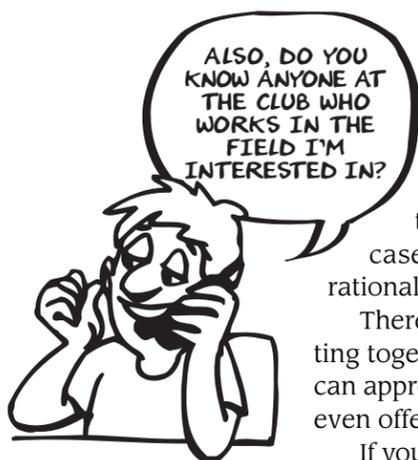
Lastly, your contact learns more about you.

**Hidden Agendas.** Your basic agenda is to get better known in the circles that count. If you are operating in the right circles, job leads will come almost automatically.

### Infosearch Goals

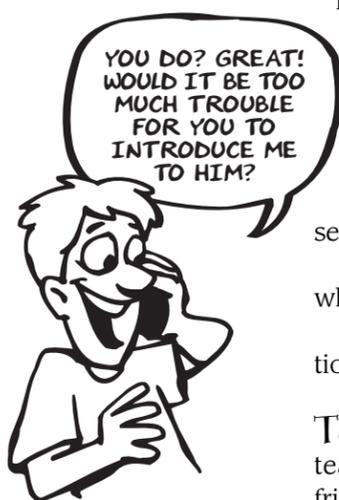
- Provide information
- Expand network size
- Create job interview later
- Open hidden job market

Figure 16.3



Create realistic situations for personal interaction that permit you to become better known.

Your hidden agenda is to get known better by influential people who you want to add to your network.



In most cases you want to talk specifically about the career field in which you have an interest. The more specific your questions, the better job hunting advice approach. The job search is secondary. It will happen if it is a possibility.

You do not normally want the participant in your infosearch to know that you are in the job market. Use your network partner contacts in such a way that he or she can get to know you better. In those cases, you will need a rationale for setting up an appointment. That rationale is not usually "I am job hunting."

There are hundreds of topics you can use as legitimate rationales for getting together. If you are in school or taking a continuing education class, you can approach your contact as part of an educational learning project. You can even offer to show him or her the results of your project at a later date.

If you are currently employed, you could approach contacts on behalf of a product to which you want to introduce them. You could solicit opinions as part of a market or product research effort. You could even try to sell the product or service to them on a low-key basis.

It is common for people to get together to discuss an avocation. You may have some mutual friends or you may be supporters of the same sports team. You may be approaching contacts on behalf of a civic responsibility that you have. You may want to talk politics or religion.

The rationale for the meeting is relatively immaterial from the infosearch standpoint. You need about 30 minutes to help the person to know you better. You need to guide the conversation sufficiently to allow you to talk enough about yourself so that you get better known by another potential network partner.

**Advantages.** Infosearch has some major advantages over job interviewing. If you were job interviewing, you probably would not get the appointment. Job interviewing is a pressure-generating situation for both parties.

Infosearch takes the heat off of both parties. You each have a greater chance of just being yourselves.

There is no point in this strategy where you have to deal with rejection. The contact does not have to handle a delicate situation by sending you a rejection letter.

Infosearch permits both of you to create and leave a positive impression of each other. The positive feeling you can leave with the contact means that he or she can relax and say, "I like that person."

Infosearch costs you and the other party nothing but time. Hopefully, it will turn out to be a pleasant experience for both parties. In many cases, your contact will be flattered that you called and took the time to seek counsel. You very likely created important goodwill.

Most important of all, you are building an effective network of partners who know and respect you.

One of the side benefits could be a job lead or an interview recommendation. It also creates another possible mutual acquaintance.

**Targets.** Infosearch leads you to other people. The starting points are teachers, work colleagues, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and friends of friends.

### Contact Resources for Names of Individuals

- Guide to American Directories
- Encyclopedia of Associations
- Standard and Poor's Register
- Directory of Corporate Affiliations
- Standard Directory of Advertisers
- Federal Directory
- Polk's World Bank Directory
- Directory of Directors
- Dunn and Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory
- Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies
- Thomas Register of American Manufacturers
- Taylor's Encyclopedia of Government Officials
- Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries
- World Wide Web Directories

Figure 16.4

*People in your career field are likely to be most helpful to you.*

By developing additional infosearch contacts, you continually add to your network partner base. You want to look toward leaders and highly successful people.

Focus on people in career fields to which you aspire. You want to ask questions related to your career interest. Some contacts could eventually turn out to be decision-makers that you will interview with for jobs.

## Contact Sources

Who you approach largely depends upon your career thrust and your specific job targets. Contact information is also available from persons outside your current network partners.

**Professional Counselors.** Counselors work for college career services, educational institutions (teachers and counselors), government employment services, government social work agencies, and private search firms.

Approach these groups directly. Give them a telephone call, set up an appointment, or walk in to visit with them. They deal in jobs and advice. They will provide you with specific names of people to contact if you can give them some guidance on specific types of people you wish to interview.

Do not ask them to give you a list of all their contacts. That could be thousands of names. Help them





sort out the specific group of contacts that are relevant to your situation. Try to obtain telephone numbers as well as addresses and e-mail addresses.

You are likely to still need more names to approach. Your largest but not best source is a career library, the Internet, or the public library. Thousands of names are available there for you to view.

**Newspapers.** Classified ads for employment frequently give specific names of job decision-makers. You do not need to confine your search to the most up-to-date newspapers. Back issues are just as good. You are not going to apply for a specific listed job so you do not even need to concern yourself with whether or not a job listing is in your area of specialty. Your goal is to increase the size of your network.

You need to look for organizations that you feel might offer the position to which you aspire. You want to contact someone in that position to whom you can go and talk.

Normally, a want ad gives the HR department's employment individual as a contact. Call that person and obtain the name of someone working in your field. Try to obtain complete contact information, including the telephone number and e-mail addresses.

**Career Path****[www.careerpath.com](http://www.careerpath.com)**

Job search engine for scores of the largest newspapers in the world / search classified ads with a highly flexible engine of options / operated by Career Builder / contacts galore.

**Telephone Book.** In many instances you can identify the organizations or at least types of organizations that are most likely to employ people in the capacity you are seeking. The yellow pages should help you in this identifying process. This database is available on the Internet.

**Corporate Information Resources**

- Business Periodical Index
- Readers Guide To Periodical Literature
- National Association of Colleges and Employers
- The Wall Street Journal
- Barron's
- Business Week
- Forbes
- Fortune
- Inc
- Hoover's.com

**Figure 16.5**



The only information about the organization you need to get is its address and telephone number. You can call the switchboard to obtain the name, title, e-mail, and telephone number of the person or persons working in your area of specialty.

Many times you can go to the plant or office building and see a directory in the lobby. If there is a receptionist, he or she may share the internal telephone directory with you for a limited period of time. Scanning through the lobby directory or the internal telephone book will greatly aid in identifying the right people to contact.

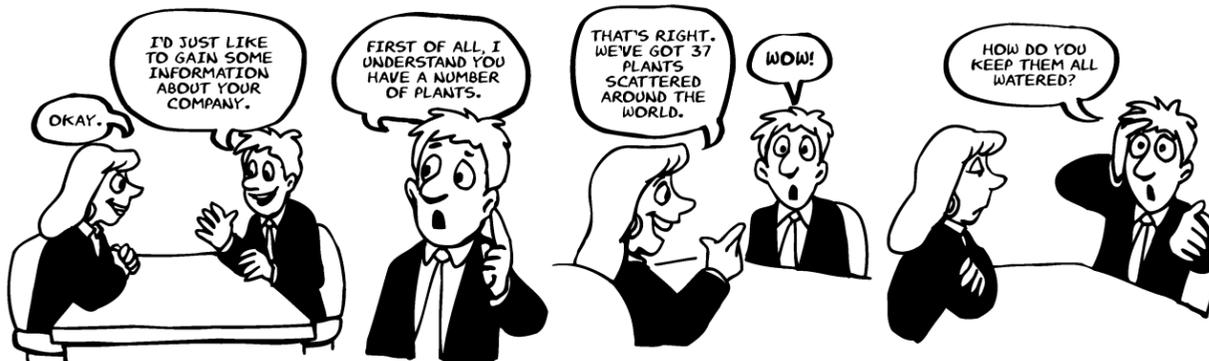
**Professional Associations.** Your area of competence may have a professional association (or several of them), which many of the people in the position you seek belong to. If you obtain that membership list, you have one of the best potential infosearch networks imaginable.

Chances are very good that your professional association has a website. There is often a membership directory available. It typically provides links to contact data. Public libraries can help you identify relevant associations and professional societies. Call and see if you can join the association as an aspirant. You might simply ask if you can obtain a membership directory. It may be on the www.

Do not indicate that you intend to use this as an employment prospect list. You want to use it in your infosearch strategy. Your purpose is to become known by people who count in your area of interest.

Geographical location may be a limiting variable for you. If so, select the names of those people in your region. If geography is not a problem, try to identify the current and past leaders in the profession. These are often older people who are more willing to help others break into and move up in the profession.

**Directories.** Public libraries maintain extensive collections of various types of directories. Whether you are seeking a job in education, government, business, or the nonprofit sector, you may find a directory pertinent to your



**Informational Interview Process**

- Telephone for 30-minute appointment
- Send confirming follow-up letter or e-mail
- Prepare presentation
- Make list of questions
- Conduct informational interview
- Leave a feeler
- Ask for other names to contact
- Send thank-you letter or e-mail
- Maintain regular contact

Figure 16.6

interests. You are particularly interested in directories that are updated regularly. There is even a *Directory of Directories!*

In the business sector, you will find directories like *Thomas' Register*, *Million Dollar Directory*, *Standard and Poor's*, *Moody's*, and those of a variety of investment services. There is an *Encyclopedia of Associations* and a *Foundation Directory*. One very useful directory is the *Directory of National Trade and Professional Associations*.

You need specific names, preferably names of people one or more levels above the position you will be seeking. Surf to websites for the specific contacts you may need.

**Other Publications.** A librarian or career center counselor can direct you to a variety of sources of names. Many specific

career publications contain leads for you to follow. America's Job Bank website at [www.ajb.gov](http://www.ajb.gov) offers a very thorough resource for you.

## Opening Doors

Begin your infosearch by telephoning your network partners. If the contact is someone you know, you only need to indicate the subject and how much time you need.

Most infosearch interviews last 30 to 45 minutes. If your contact has been recommended by another person, be certain to mention that person's name. In asking for a few minutes of someone's time, you are appealing to their desire to help you with your project or concern. Most people are flattered when you seek their advice, so that helps you get your foot in the door.

Very busy people may want to put you off. Do not push. Being a pusher will not help you meet your objective of getting known *and* liked. Volunteer to meet them after work or for lunch, but do not be overbearing. If you get a "no" answer, close the conversation by saying you want to keep the door open. Leave your name, e-mail, and phone number. Follow up with an e-mail thank you and a resume later.



**Conducting.** An infosearch appointment requires planning. You want the interview to flow in the direction that is most advantageous to you. You set up the meeting and thus you are responsible for controlling it. You will look disorganized and ill-informed if you let the interview take its own course.

Infosearch planning involves setting up a strategy. If you set up a 30-minute appointment, you need to break the time into at least four components with time frames tied to each section.

After a brief introduction and some rapport building, you will need to take charge. Taking charge means knowing what you are going to cover in an organized sequence of events. You cannot afford to waste the other person's valuable time.

### Infosearch Questions to Ask

Because you are evaluated on your “questions,” your preface to each question shows what you already know. Preface your questions with a lead-in that gives info about your background that indicates why the question is important to you. That gives you time to let your future partner get to know you better.

- What are some important long-term trends affecting your industry?
- How aware are others in your profession of (cite an important trend) and what impact might it have?
- How do you see (a problem or issue) affecting your (industry or profession) in five years?
- To what extent do (trends and issues) impact upon hiring policies?
- What educational qualifications are necessary before starting a career in (occupation or industry)?
- Which of my credentials should I emphasize if I interview in this field?
- What actions should I take to better prepare me for a career in this field?
- How much competition am I going to face if I elect a career in your field?
- What good sources of further information about this trend would be good for me to read?
- Can you recommend some other good people for me to talk to?
- If I got into your field, what would my co-workers be like?
- What level of recognition do most organizations give to this endeavor?
- To what extent do other organizations invest in further training in your field?
- What are some of the typical advancement paths in your field?
- How secure is the field in most organizations in terms of contributing to the bottom line?
- Can you give me some idea of the entry-level compensation and what might be possible later?
- What types of opportunities outside of the field have people gone into later?
- Why do people accept less money in this field when they could be earning a lot more elsewhere?
- Based upon my background, where do you think that I would have to start?
- What would you suggest for me to do right now?
- How might I reposition my resume to improve my chances for success?
- How could I use my accomplishments to tie myself more directly to the field in an interview?
- Do you feel that I should go back to school to pick up additional training in the field?
- What is the best way to get through the tough resume screen in the field with so many applicants?
- Could you identify some organizations that employ large numbers of people in your occupation?
- How important is an advanced degree in this field for long-term advancement?
- If you had to start your career again, what education and experiences would you try to obtain?
- What is a typical day (week or month) of specific duties and job activities like?
- What do you really like and dislike about the field?
- Can you recommend some specific websites that will keep me current?

Have you made copious notes that you can enter into the notes portion of Outlook?

Figure 16.7



*You are in charge and asking questions, not the interviewer. The tables are turned and yet you are still getting better known.*

*Prepare your questions in advance.*

**Format.** Most infosearches follow a question-and-answer routine. An exception is where you take time to make a presentation. Your questions should be written. You need to convey the impression that you have a definite purpose (almost a script) and want to cover a lot of territory in a short period of time.

Take a note pad. Have your questions written down. Make notes as the contact speaks. By nods, gestures, and writing, you will be showing great interest in what is being said. People like to sense that you are accepting what they say as important.

Watch for areas of obvious pride. Begin to probe into these areas even if it means temporarily deviating from your interview outline. If the contact puts great importance in a given area, take the time to explore it in sufficient depth. It may be an area of importance to you that you have overlooked.

**Questions.** The questions you ask largely determine the impression you leave. They must be well thought out and relevant to the situation. You are being evaluated more on the basis of your questions than anything else.

If you are infosearching someone who is working in a field or job to which you aspire, you need to focus your questions in this area. The following questions (and those in Figure 16.7) are representative of the line of questioning that you should take.

What do you do? What is a typical day like? What is a terrible day like? May I tag along for a day? What do you like and dislike about your job? How did you get into this field? What has been your line of advancement?

What is your academic training? What will be your next promotion? What would you recommend for me? What do employers in your career field look for in interviews?

**Close.** Before you end, think back on your original objective. Has it been met? The close is the time you begin to pull everything together. Let the person know that you have been carefully recording (mentally or in writing) what was being said. Summarize the results.

Be sure to close on a happy note. Tell your contact that it was an enjoyable and truly enlightening learning experience for you. Thank the person for the time and information. Let him or her know how you intend to use the information and factor it into future career decisions.

Keep the door open for a return visit. Ask for permission to visit again if you should find you need more information at a later time. The memory of your pleasant attitude and smiling face is the best thing you can leave with the person.

Leave some information with your potential partner. At a minimum you will leave a business card. Encourage the person to contact you if anything important was not covered. If appropriate and subtle, you might even ask the person to review your resume with you and then leave a copy. Don't ask for a job interview.

Send a thank-you e-mail with your resume attached and a short paragraph stating your long-term career interest, which serves as a reminder. Another follow up 30 days later also helps.





**Referral Request.** You are going to need more infosearch contacts. Before you leave, ask if the contact knows other people in similar capacities who would be good to “touch base with.” If you keep expanding your network, your objective will soon be met.

**Feelers.** Many times a “feeler” is appropriate. A feeler is a subtle way of saying that you are interested in employment later. Feelers are not direct requests for job leads, but they come close. A few examples are listed below.

- Not looking now, but . . .
- If you hear of something . . .
- Might consider a move if . . .
- Keep me in mind if you . . .

Feelers keep the door open for later follow-up.

Feelers do not work immediately, but when properly followed up, they can be very positive statements.

Feelers let your contact know that if the right circumstance was identified, you might consider a move. Feelers do not say, “I need a job.” Feelers do not ask for a job but their message is clear.

## Info Interview Follow-up

In preparing and conducting an infosearch, you invested several hours. Hopefully, there was an important payoff at the time of the appointment. You need to have longer-term payoffs as well. A follow-up can significantly increase your future partner’s effectiveness for you.

Your conversation revolved around a topic of mutual interest, but since you called the meeting, you are the one who should send a note of appreciation. Let the person know how you felt about the meeting in a positive way. If

Keep in touch on a periodic basis.



### Conducting the Infosearch

A thoughtful strategy enhances your info interview results.

- Plan expected results in advance
- Prepare an introduction or purpose
- Give a brief background bibliography
- Prepare a list of questions
- Focus on three to five topics
- Ask specific questions, not generalities
- Confine the interview to 30 minutes
- Request advice frequently
- Listen attentively
- Write notes in your notebook
- Follow up on questions after listening attentively
- Ask for names of others to contact
- Avoid "Do you know of any jobs?"
- Leave a feeler about job options
- Close with "Thank you"
- Follow up with letter and resume with thank you
- Build a bridge for future follow-up

What tactics did you use in your infosearch?

Figure 16.8

you send a follow-up note, your contact will assume that your goals for the meeting have been satisfied.

After the infosearch you will know how your partner might prove helpful as a source of future job leads. The odds are very high that your partner has the power to influence others who can help you later in your job search.

In all probability, you will want to send a resume with a brief note leaving a "feeler." An attached resume with your e-mail thank you might be appropriate.

Immediately after the infosearch you have an obvious reason for getting back in touch because you want to say "thank you." You need to maintain the relationship through periodic follow-ups. The best way to do this is to let the person know of your progress on a regular basis, probably monthly.

Send the results of any project that you may have discussed in the interview. Is there something you have or know that would be of value to the contact? Use it as another reason to reestablish contact.





Always leave feelers whenever you contact these persons. Encourage them to “keep in touch” and promise to keep them informed of your plans and progress. Keep current resumes in their hands. Always acknowledge how appreciative you are of their help. The interview and forget strategy does more harm than good.

Infosearch is part of your exploring stage of career planning and an integral part of your search strategy. Infosearch is the best tool you have for learning about the field in which you want to work. Genuine interest generates job interviews later.

Infosearch is one of the most effective means of tapping the “hidden job market.” The job market is hidden partly because people want to keep what they say about others a secret. If you can keep people whispering nice things about you to others, the hidden job market has a good chance of opening its doors to you.

Like most employment strategies, infosearch has some upper limits. You can improve on methodology, strategy, and technique, but yet you are limited by some constraints that are beyond your control, such as the economic environment.

The beauty of infosearch is that there are no limits placed upon your resourcefulness, creativity, competence, achievement, and contribution. If you keep putting those together in packages for others to see, evaluate, and discuss, you will eventually achieve a major breakthrough in your job search.

## Career Action Projects: Just Do It

### Network Partners

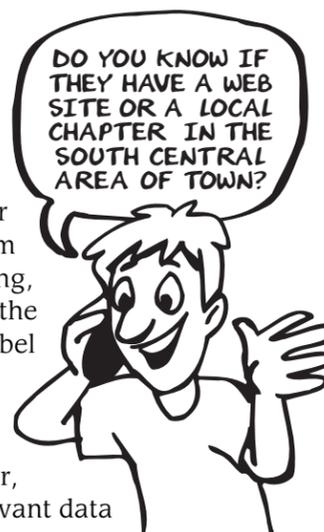
Prepare a list of all of the people you know who might possibly be influential in your job search process. Include name, title or occupation, address, e-mail, and telephone number for each of them. These are your current and potential network partners.

Categorize your list by teachers, work associates, friends, relatives, acquaintances, and friends of friends. Be very inclusive!

**Network Action Project.** Make a network list go down a three-inch column on the left side of an 8½” × 11” sheet of paper. Label this column “Contact.” It might be best to do this in Excel.

Beside each name, indicate what action you expect to carry out to involve that person in your career planning program. You may be giving them your resume, job interviewing, infosearching, requesting advice, etc. Make this list go down the middle three inches of the 8½” × 11” sheet and label it “Action.”

You should have about fifty names in your list. Leave about one-half inch between names. You should have their name, title, employer, address, telephone number, and any other relevant data on this list.





### Cultivating Connections

#### Cultivating is a polite word for schmoozing. How is your mastery at farming?

Cultivating individuals who can help you identify potential employers and/or tell you about potential job openings for which you might be qualified is fundamental in career networking activities.

Most employers usually start the employee search by informally identifying potential candidates long before the position is formally announced. Schmoozing your way into this hidden market is a widely accepted job search strategy.

Your best job interviews may well be informal chats with individuals giving you job information for you to use in finding employment elsewhere. You should recognize that you are continually cultivating connections.

The informal "advice sharing" session can be your job interview. Do not leave these important events as an unplanned chance meeting. Schmoozing works!

Making the right connection does not ensure a job offer. No matter how powerful your partner is, you still have to compete and prove that you are the best candidate for any opening.

Regardless of how an employer sources candidates for a job, you can be certain that you face competition. You could embarrass your partner if you fared poorly in subsequent interviews with others in the organization.

One of your strongest connection creators are university alumni. Many universities provide graduates and alumni mutual access to each other by distributing directories and presenting meetings for mixing purposes in selected locations. Investigate the possibility of cultivating that connection opportunity. You may find alumni names on the Internet for your college. Schmoozing with successful alums pay great dividends.

Cultivating connections goes far beyond career concerns. Successful people constantly nurture and constantly build lasting relationships with many people.

Relationship building activities occur at regular business activities, conventions, trade shows, alumni gatherings, professional association meetings, athletic clubs, civic groups, political events, religious organizations, social friendships, and even family reunions. The need to cultivate your connections never ceases. Cultivation is a lifelong activity.

Whatever your career endeavors (most of us have several), success depends on other people. How effectively you get your ideas and thoughts across to clients, subordinates, supervisors, and personal acquaintances impacts upon your ultimate success.

Cultivating connections is fruitless without an ability to subsequently deliver a well-organized, articulate, and meaningful message.

#### What are you doing right now to increase your yields?



Beside each name and action indicate the approximate date that you believe would be most appropriate for you to make your move. Note this date in the 1½" column on the right side of the page.

You should now have an action plan for involving your network partners in your job search strategy. Follow this plan and build a follow-up system into it. You later should tape a second 8½" × 11" page beside the first to record the "Date" and "Action/Results" of future contacts.

Your goal is to encourage the contacts to work on your behalf in sharing your resume, providing infosearch people, and making specific job referrals. This network will only continue to work for you as you continue massaging it.





## Informational Interview Project

Develop a list of all people who you feel are candidates for your infosearch. These are your network partners and potential partners. Add to that list names of people currently working in the career field to which you aspire who would be likely infosearch prospects. Identify the “influencers” in your area of interest. Use Figure 16.1 to record your contacts or Outlook.

Narrow the list to include only those contacts within a reasonable driving distance. Include the name, title or occupation, address, e-mail, and telephone number of each of your infosearch people.

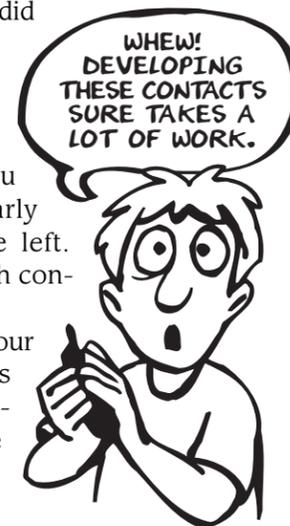
**Infosearch Career Action Project.** Based upon your specific background, develop “twenty questions” you plan to ask each network partner. Preface each question with two or more brief sentences that describe you and indicate a reason for asking the question. Use Figure 16.7 as your guide.

Each question, with its informative preface, should be about five to ten sentences. These could be on notecards for reminder purposes.

For example, “I studied English for four years in college and worked as a reporter for two years. I believe that I have pretty fair writing abilities. What was your training and how much did it help you in your career?”

Conduct two infosearchs using your questions as a guide. Prepare an evaluation explaining the circumstances and the results. Separately, evaluate the potential use of this resource in helping you gain entry into the position you desire. Particularly comment about the feelers that you may have left. Prepare a network contact like Figure 16.1 for each contact or a contact manager like Outlook.

As a follow-up, write a letter of appreciation to your infosearch contact. Mention some important points that were established in your conversation. This letter should be no more than one page. It will serve as an example to use for each of your informational interviews.





Re-evaluate your use of the infosearch technique in your job search strategy. Will it work for you? Why or why not? What would be the long-term advantages and disadvantages of your adopting this strategy? Write a plan on how you intend to use the infosearch strategy. What did you learn from this infosearch project? Networking partners and informational interviewing may well be your most important long-term job search strategy.

