



Networking Tips

“Networking” is a term you hear a lot about when it comes to job search and careers. So, what is it?

Networking is the exchange of information or services with people who may be able to help you obtain your career goals. Networking is about establishing and cultivating beneficial relationships with industry professionals, career advisors and potential employers.

Though a job might not come from networking right away – doing it effectively can help introduce your skills and experience to a potential employer. It is an extension of traditional job search, and when you consider that 43% of all professionals working in the insurance industry say they got their first position by “referral”, you know it is a method that might just work for you!

Here are some tips, tricks and thoughts on how to network effectively and potentially connect to a rewarding career in insurance.

- 1. Target Audience** – Consider who you will be at each event (whether it be a career fair, industry dinner, panel conversation, seminar/special event, etc.) you attend and prepare accordingly. Who will be there? What messages will you want to send or convey? How do you want to be perceived? What tools (eg. resumes, business cards, e-mail addresses etc.) are appropriate and could be exchanged to help you build on your connection?
- 2. Appearance** – Put your best foot forward – choose an outfit that you are comfortable in and appears well put together. When in doubt, consult with a trusted friend, career services professional or a web site like Talentegg.ca or jobpostings.ca for suggestions on how to dress for success!
- 3. Research** – A good way to prepare for networking is to research the event and the attendees. Visit an employer or organization’s Web site and read industry publications, blogs, etc. to learn about their core business, customer base, values, where they are located, and if they might have opportunities of interest for you.

Research will help you target key employers and develop some specific questions to ask attendees/representatives from those companies. As well, when it comes time to attend the event, some knowledge on relevant current events or industry happenings can come in handy for conversations with other attendees and employers.

Keep an open mind when conducting your research – remember, just because you may not have heard about a particular company or industry before, doesn’t mean there isn’t an opportunity that is right for you.

4. **Set Goals** – This comes with doing proper research. What do you want to get out of this event? Who in particular do you want to meet? How many people will you network with? Setting a goal can put a container around “networking”, give you some direction and can also help to make it a little less intimidating.
5. **The Handshake**- A handshake is a first impression contact point that many of us overlook. Extend your hand, make eye contact and firmly shake the person you are meeting’s hand. A confident handshake can help your networking start and end off on the right note.
6. **Practice Your “Elevator Pitch”** – How can you maximize the first 30 seconds when you meet someone? Have a great synopsis of who you are, what you do and what you have to offer. The key is to practice introducing elements of this pitch into your conversations rather than feeling you need to “launch into it” and deliver it in it’s entirety right away.

Practice with friends, family and career advisors. Career and Employment Centres can be a great resource for helping you develop your “pitch” if you are feeling unsure about what to say or how to say it.

7. **Keep it natural...** - Remember, networking is really all about having a series of conversations. Let them happen, flow and come to an end naturally. A genuine, confident and professional approach will tend to yield the best results.
8. **Follow Through and Follow-Up** – Complete the application process (along with connecting to let your contact know you have done so), send a note, make a call or forward that web link you were talking about in your conversation... These are all ways to solidify and continue to grow a connection with your new contacts. It is also an opportunity to say “thanks” and emphasize that you enjoyed meeting them.

Some of the contacts you make at an event will be “warmer” than others. Meaning, it feels like a contact who is more likely to be of help in achieving your career goals. Consider approaching these contacts for informational interviews, exploring job opportunities, or even just making additional contacts

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