

This newsletter is written by Debra Feldman, the head of JobWhiz, a career management and transition firm for executives. Sharing her article with our members does not mean that the TENG, Bruner Consulting or I am endorsing her services. Her article below discusses networking and job searching during the holiday season. Many jobseekers erroneously conclude that this is a slow time, but it can be a particularly active and opportunistic one if you avoid the distractions of the approaching holidays. If you wish to send her feedback or contact her, you will find her Web address and phone number at the end of this article I am grateful for her contribution. Ed Pospesil

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Twelve Tips to Network Purposefully™: How to Optimize the Jolly Season for Career Advancement

By Debra Feldman, the JobWhiz

Here we are approaching the calendar year-end home stretch.. While job hunters may feel like their progress is going to slow down at holiday time, many hiring managers and decision makers actually are in a crunch. So for you savvy job seekers, now is a great time for you to voluntarily provide assistance to prospective employers and unequivocally demonstrate that you are a roll up your sleeves kind of team player, ready, willing and able to dig in and join their organization now.

For any job hunters who are networking challenged, holiday time is a chance to invite someone you need to or want to know to join you for a festivity – offer them a ride, provide directions, give them an admission ticket, remind them of its time and date, etc. Late November and December is definitely a super time to get out and circulate, to network in person, over the phone, via email and through holiday cards. Extra bonus: do proper follow up on the December networking reconnecting with new and existing contacts and this gives you an opportunity in January to get back in touch and stay on their radar screen!

Many individuals, especially those who tend to be socially challenged (Hello, all you right brainers out there!) can breathe a sigh of relief because the holiday season offers so many occasions to make small talk about subjects most people find easier to handle like family, holidays, shopping, parties, the weather, etc. People find lots to share when it comes to the holidays; these topics will help to break awkward silences or can be used to warm up a conversation which further strengthens and builds relationships. All this good interpersonal interaction promotes positive networking experiences, ones you can leverage to identify possible or planned restructurings, new initiatives, acquisitions and divestitures, retirements and other opportunities that produce new, unadvertised job opportunities comprising the hidden job market.

Try these dozen networking tips to whet your taste for networking, to break the ice, rev up your contact making opportunities, get the confidence juices flowing and maximize your holiday time interactions to unearth a new position or create a new connection .

After you exchange standard greetings and politely inquire about each other's welfare is the time to launch into a discussion to uncover the hidden job market. Here are 12 tips to improve your ability to Network Purposefully™ that have been custom designed for anyone currently in transition or thinking of making a change in the new year. Happy Hunting! Happy Holidays! Happy Networking!

1. Do your homework. Before venturing into unknown territory get prepared for the adventure. Study your subject. Get familiar with the layout. List the best and the worst possibilities and make notes on how to handle them.
2. Try to find out in advance who is expected to be there. Is this an event worth your appearing or should you allocate your time and money to a cause with more networking potential or a higher quotient of fun?
3. What do you want to accomplish when you finally get in front of the target contact? Do you want their card, email address, telephone number or better their *permission* to contact them afterwards to discuss your mutual interests, a referral to someone they know that you need to meet? How are you going to approach them? What are you going to say? You'll fumble less if you plan your word ahead of time.
4. Just like a job interview over lunch is never about filling your stomach, a holiday networking occasion is never about the libations. It's for you to focus on learning as much as you can (and remembering all you can- take notes discreetly) from whomever you speak with and concentrate on expanding your circle of relevant and first hand contacts.
5. An event is invaluable, rare face-to-face encounter in the age of cyberspace, emails, telephones and faxes. This means creating good, warm, interpersonal chemistry that is the building block for a future relationship founded on mutual trust and credibility. Your first impression COUNTS. Keep those breath mints, smile buttons and business cards handy!! Leave the casual at home and dress up for the occasion to mingle with some movers and shakers in your industry.
6. Research those you will be meeting. Check out the vitals on the company, bios of decisions makers, recent industry trends and current events. Be ready to discuss at least one or two specific items or issues that you have studied in depth—so you can make a good impression and maybe surprise someone with your knowledge, understanding and obvious initiative. Explore the company website or online business databases to prep for meetings.
7. Remember that you can't do much harm keeping your mouth shut. If you don't have anything to add, no need to talk. You can't hurt yourself being quiet and nodding, offering a friendly smile and being simply pleasant acknowledging that you are listening appreciatively. Better to leave no impression or a neutral one than to damage your reputation because you talked out of turn or didn't make a politically correct statement. (*Caution: you may be sober but you don't know what the others who are listening could be hearing and then later reporting.*)
8. Go with a purpose. Your time and everyone else's who is there is valuable. Don't waste your time or anyone else's, be respectful and courteous. If there is a certain person who you want to meet, it would be best to get introduced to them by a mutual contact. This is easier than walking up cold to introduce yourself.

9. Find someone who knows whom you need to know and ask them if they will introduce you to the third party you need to meet. It's better if you can then do something helpful for your introducer- one hand washes the other, what goes round comes round, etc. Never forget a favor. Always say thank you.
10. Write timely thank you's for assistance, introductions, referrals, advice, etc. Not only does this make a favorable impression and show that you have good manners and are courteous, it makes someone else feel good to know they are appreciated.
11. If possible, find a partner to work the room. You'll be surprised how much easier it is to meet new people when the two of you approach an individual or group. You can start by introducing yourselves. The dynamics of two strangers doing this seem to be so much easier than if a single new person attempts to break into a throng and get involved in a discussion.
12. Quality is more important than quantity. It is better to invest your time really sharing and talking to a few carefully chosen contacts than to have a zillion superficial interactions. Don't break off a productive discussion to start another one leaving your first partner hanging without your contact info! Your goal is to be remembered for the right reasons and for someone to get involved enough to take action on your behalf. You need to be more than a name on a card or resume, be a resource they'll keep on their radar for appropriate referrals and recommendations.

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Debra Feldman is the JobWhiz™, a nationally-recognized expert who designs and personally implements swift, strategic, and customized senior level executive job search campaigns, banishing barriers that prevent immediate success. Her gift for cold calling -- executed with high energy and savvy panache -- connects candidates directly to decision makers, not HR. Network Purposefully™ with the JobWhiz, and compress your job search into mere weeks, using groundbreaking techniques profiled in Forbes magazine.

In addition to writing columns and conducting workshops for the AICPA, IEEE, Financial Executives International (FEI), Marketing Executives Networking Group (MENG), Financial Executives Networking Group (FENG), Technology Executives Networking Group (TENG), and Harvard Business School, Debra is endorsed by NetShare, BlueSteps and ConstructionExecutive. The career officers at several top tier colleges and universities also recommend her to their alumni. Contact Debra now at www.JobWhiz.com to expedite your executive ascent!

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