

## **10 Steps to Networking Success**

By Brad Schwartz

**Question: My colleague just landed a great job with another company and I'm envious. I didn't even see the position listed in the newspaper or on an Internet jobsite. Is there another source I should be checking?**

**Answer: Yes, check in with your networking contacts.**

It's commonly estimated that 70-80% of jobs are filled by word of mouth. Only 20-30% of jobs end up listed as a classified ad! Networking is crucial to your career advancement.

But contrary to popular belief, networking is not just about getting a job. It's much more. Networking is about establishing professional relationships, gaining valuable feedback, making educated decisions and increasing your visibility in your field.

Networking should be an important aspect of your career, especially now since most people tend to make job changes more frequently. But it doesn't have to be a chore. If you make it second nature, you may even enjoy the opportunity to meet new contacts and establish professional relationships. Here are 10 easy steps to put your networking skills into high gear:

### **1. Always Have Your Game Face On**

Networking can happen anytime, anywhere. Opportunities occur while you are standing in line at Starbucks during the morning rush, picking up your child from daycare and even while sweating it out at the gym. Be prepared to recognize a networking prospect. And always try to be on your best behavior. Parties, events, religious gatherings, reunions and volunteer activities are also great chances to meet contacts.

### **2. Join the Club**

Are you genuinely interested in your industry? Join a professional organization to meet new faces and learn about other companies in the property management arena. Be sure to attend the events regularly, at least once a month. This is a great way to get your name out there.

### **3. Network with Everyone**

Did you meet a great contact, but he or she works in a completely different industry? Don't hesitate to network with someone who has no apparent connection to your career. Your new contact may be able to pass on relevant names of his or her family, friends or colleagues.

### **4. Have Your Resume Ready**

You never know when a contact will call with a great career opportunity and you will need to email your resume pronto. Or, if you meet a new contact, send a short note and a copy of your resume for him or her to keep on file.

### **5. Keep In Touch**

Follow up with your contacts regularly. It's your responsibility to keep the lines of communication open. Keep on top of his or her career moves and make sure he or she stays informed of yours. Holiday cards and quick emails are an easy way to keep in touch.

### **6. Schedule Informational Interviews**

An informational interview is a great way to learn more about a career or industry, without the stress of trying to land a job. You are free to ask almost any question and are likely to get an honest answer. Some good questions include why your contact chose to work in this industry, what skills are most needed, where to find the best jobs and what's the current climate of the industry. After your meeting, be sure to send a thank you note that highlights points of your discussion that you found most helpful.

### **7. Don't Burn Bridges**

Even if you can't wait to clean out your desk and start with a new company, be sure to keep in touch with your past employer. An active, friendly communication could benefit you in the future. Don't burn bridges when you leave a company.

### **8. Keep Good Records**

Good record keeping is essential. You never know when you might need to call that great contact you met at a trade show last year. Use your Palm, Outlook, a data file on your computer or just write it down in a notebook. Keep basic contact information, job titles, how you met them and notes on your conversations.

### **9. Put Your Feelers Out**

If you are actively looking for a new job, call on everyone you know. Contact your immediate and extended family, friends of the family, volunteer connections, old college buddies, recruiters, past employers and professional organization members. There could be an excellent career opportunity lurking in the mind of one of these people.

### **10. Network For Your Company Too**

Happily employed? You can still network for your company while helping your personal pursuits at the same time. Attend industry events, represent your company at a trade show and even chat about your business with a neighbor.

By following these 10 steps, you can develop your personal brand and be the person your networking contacts think of the next time a job arises. And remember, networking is a collaboration. Every time you ask for something or meet with a contact, you should think about how you can help him or her in return.

### **Keep Sending Me Your Questions**

Each month, my column will focus on a recruitment or retention question or concern facing our property management industry, as submitted by THE APTS readers. Tell me which issues affect your company. What is important to you? Keep your questions coming and email me at [brad@msbresources.com](mailto:brad@msbresources.com).

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