Networking Skills

Networking is the process of talking to people to create friendships, collect names of contacts (people to go for advice or help), and learn information to help you succeed in your career. A network gives you two advantages: 1) You will be among the first to hear about good job openings from your network contacts. 2) You will be among the first to learn important career information about your industry and future trends. Knowing how to build a network is an important career skill. Here are some tips to help your networking skills:

Tip #1: Find People for Your Network. Include people you know in your network — friends, family members, relatives, people you meet on the job, as well as those you meet in school — teachers, counselors, secretaries, janitors, etc. You may also include people you meet in school clubs, sports, and hobbies — or even while working out in the gym. In addition, you may network on social media sites with career professionals on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, Google+ and blogs.

Tip #2: Clean up Your Social Media Reputation. When you use social media sites for your career, you need to keep a professional social media identity. Keep your social media privacy settings high. Do not fill out your social media profile (such as Facebook). Remove any posts, comments, photos, and games that an employer may see and not like. Join groups that will add positive to your internet career identity. Follow blogs in your career area to meet and mingle with others in your career area.

Tip #3: Organize Your Network Note Files. Make a network note file (on cards or computer). Include every person mentioned in Tip #1 and #2. Write down information about each person such as name, address (if known), place of employment, and extra information (social media site where met, birthday, food liked, hobbies, and current happenings in his or her life). You may be thinking that this is an extreme measure to take — keeping network notes. Many professionals (doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, interior designers, retail store owners) keep note files on customers.

For example, when you visit a dentist and the dentist talks to you about an event that you discussed during the last visit, it is not because the dentist has a good memory. **The dentist writes down notes about a conversation with a patient so that the dentist can continue the conversation during the patient's next visit to make the patient feel special.** Keeping network note files allows you to: 1) Impress people with your skill to remember things about them; and 2) Makes people feel special and important so that they will want to give you advice or help when you need it.

Tip #4: Respect the People in Your Network. To have friends, be a friend. Networking is not a one-way road where you do all the taking and none of the giving. The most successful networks include people who feel the flow of give and take — or of advice and help going both ways. How can you be a friend to

the people in your network? Send "Happy Birthday" text on a birthday. Make brief call or text to wish the person well for a work project in process. Send thank you text, e-mail, or note when the person did something for you. When your network person joins your group, always **greet** your network person by saying "Hi" along with their name — and **introduce** the person to others in the group. In general, treat your network people like you want to be treated.

Tip #5: Prepare Your Elevator Pitch. An elevator pitch is a short speech to quickly sell yourself and your skills to another person. At a meeting you may meet a business person who asks, "Are you attending this meeting?" Your answer (or elevator pitch) should be about one to two minutes and cover what you need important people to know about you: school attending or job, your skills, current projects, and what you plan for a future career. **"Yes, I am attending this meeting. My name is Joe Smith. I'm a student at Career-ville College majoring in Computer Technology. My plan is to work as a computer technician and coder after graduation. May I give you my business card?"** Then, give the person your business card (yes, college students have business cards for networking). Your business card needs to be professional-looking, and provide your name and contact information. You may ask the person for his or her business card. After you give an elevator pitch and exchanged business cards — Success! You have made a network contact! An important person knows about you, has your business card in case the person wants to contact you about a job, and you have a business card also for your network file.

Tip #5: Join Networking Clubs. Use Google to search for networking clubs to attend — Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lion's Clubs (service clubs for business men and women) or Toastmasters International (club to teach business speaking skills). Also, you may discover that your college major (such as business, graphic arts, public relations, other) has a student club. Student clubs invite men and women who work in the career area as speakers. Attend your college major's club meetings to: 1) Get contacts for your network. 2) Add club name to your application and resume. 3) Learn more about types of jobs and job openings in your major.

QUICK CHECK:

1. What is networking?
2. A network gives you what 2 advantages?
3. a) List 5 people to include in your network.
    b) List 4 social media sites for networking.
4. List 3 things you can do to maintain a professional social media identity.
5. List 5 pieces of information you can write down about each person in your network note files.
6. Why do some dentists write down notes about a conversation with a patient?
7. List 2 things that keeping network note files allow you to do.
8. a) How can you have friends? b) List 2 ways you can be a friend to those in your network.
9. List 2 things to do when your network person joins your group.
10. a) What is an elevator pitch? b) How long should your elevator pitch be? c) List 4 things it should cover. d) What can you then give the person? e) For what can you then ask?
11. Write a short elevator pitch to answer a business person who says, "Tell me about yourself."
12. a) List names of 4 networking clubs. b) Who do college student clubs invite as speakers?
13. List 3 reasons to attend a college major's club.
14.. a) When will you start your network note files? b) Give a reason for your answer.