

## Networking is not something you do when you need to get a job or attract new customers. Networking is a lifestyle discipline that should be started by the time you graduate high school.

Every skill required in networking you likely know and have used in past interactions. Now it is a matter of applying some best practices to what you already know to become an effective networker. We'll cover Tips One through Six in this post, and Tips Seven through Twelve in our next blog.

- 1. Friendship is the Ultimate Objective.** In its simplest terms, networking is about starting out as strangers and ultimately winding up as casual friends. Casual friends know just a little more about each other than acquaintances do, but not as much as good friends.
- 2. It's Not About You.** Dale Carnegie, one of the greatest networkers in American history, says it better than anyone: "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."
- 3. Meet and Greet.** One of the best icebreakers is a simple "Hi, I'm {name}...and you are?" Smile, look them in the eye and offer a firm handshake long enough to notice their eye color. Repeat their name back to them. Dale Carnegie often remarked that a person's name, correctly pronounced, is the sweetest sound on earth to them. If necessary, ask them to repeat it and/or spell it for you so that you can mentally record it.
- 4. Ask Questions to Start the Conversation.** The easiest way to get to know someone is to ask them questions about their favorite topic - themselves. Use simple, direct questions such as, "Tell me about yourself." , "Where did you grow up?" or "What did you do today?"
- 5. Leverage Your Surroundings.** Whatever brought the two (or more) of you together is a great place to start a conversation. Ask open-ended questions (ones that cannot be answered with a yes, no, or short answer), such as, "What brought you here today?", "What are your impressions so far?", "What did you learn today that you didn't know or were surprised to hear?", and "What do you hope will happen during the rest of your time here?"
- 6. Listen Well.** People can tell whether or not you are really listening by your focus on them versus on your surroundings. Listening involves a pleasant level of eye contact, a warm expression with a slight smile, and periodic verbal and non-verbal cues that you were listening. Ask follow-up "tell me more" questions, which is a sure sign you were listening.

These networking principles and more are excerpted from our 2014 edition of the [Job Search Readiness Assessment and Development Guide](#).

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