

Networking for Employment

His employer merged with a larger company and relocated to the opposite coast, so Chuck began searching for a new opportunity. He prepared his resume and sent it to recruiters and employers. He knew he had to start networking, so he printed business cards, made copies of his resume, and began attending various organizations and associations where he could meet others who might help him find a job.

Chuck hadn't done a lot of networking in his role as chief financial officer, but he thought it should be pretty straightforward. He figured it would be like networking for business. When he met people, he would give them a business card, explain his background, tell them he was in transition, and ask if they knew of any opportunities where he might be able to use his skills. He didn't want to waste their time, so he thought he should keep it short and to the point.

After several months, Chuck began to realize networking wasn't working. Not only did he not get any job leads, but some of the people he had met before now seemed to be avoiding him.

How could he improve the effectiveness of his networking?

Like Chuck, you might be employing techniques you would use successfully when networking for business without realizing that networking for employment requires a much different approach. When you network for business, you're trying to get someone to understand your employer's products or services and consider buying them. When networking for employment, you're asking someone to risk his or her personal reputation by referring you for possible employment. You might also be taking a risk yourself by asking someone to refer you to a potential employer when you know little or nothing about that person's reputation with the potential employer.

You'll increase your effectiveness at networking for employment if you follow a simple three-phase process that I call IOU Networking. Let me explain each of the phases and why I use this acronym.

Phase 1 is when you are networking with the sole intent of **initiating** a relationship with another person. You're trying to find common ground that connects you. It might be school, where you grew up, a similar employment background, a common acquaintance, or just a similar reason for attending the event where you meet. In Phase 1, your purpose is to develop a relationship where the other person takes a sincere interest in you. You may have to "kiss a lot of frogs" in this phase, because you'll find that you won't be able to make a solid connection with many of the people at an event.

Phase 2 is when you're networking to **obtain** help or support. You're building on the relationship you developed in Phase 1 by meeting the person a second time. In this phase, your objective is to get them to understand your skills, experience and career objectives. Get their input on the appropriateness of your career objectives as supported by your skills and experience. Ask them to help you prepare and strategize on how you might approach people on your list of target companies. If they can't help you with research on some of the companies, ask if they can recommend others who might be able to answer your questions.

Phase 3 is when you can put the relationship and the knowledge you gained from them, and their knowledge of you, to good **use**. If you took the time to develop the relationship in Phase 1 and to nurture it in Phase 2, your contact should know you as a person, understand your skills and experience, and feel confident enough in you and your abilities to refer you to someone who might have a position. Since you now have a personal relationship with them and they're comfortable with you, they're much more likely to be one of your champions to others.

Keep in mind the phase you're in while networking; don't try to get to Phase 3 too soon. If you try to short-circuit the process, you're likely to lose the contact. Think of all the help and support you'll miss. Developing and nurturing relationships with people who will be your champion takes time and effort.

So why is it called "IOU" Networking? IOU is an acronym for "Initiate, Obtain, Use." Plus, when your contacts help you make connections with potential employers and you're successful at finding your dream job, you'll owe everyone on your list a big thanks!

Now go take charge of your career!

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of [12 Steps to a New Career](#). He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies. These stories reflect actual experiences, modified to protect the identities of individuals and employers. If you have a question you would like answered, contact Carl at www.ExecGlobalNet.com.