

The Art of Networking to Hire

“It’s not *what* you know, it’s *who* you know.” Most people are familiar with this saying and have experienced this statement first hand. The phrase frequently reveals itself under circumstances when people are in need of assistance or support. This happens oftentimes with job seekers, who are confronted with the challenge of finding a reputable job. The same scenario also applies to employers looking to fill a position. Many companies sponsor referral bonuses or provide incentives to current employees who refer a member in their network to the company.

Although using current employees’ networks is an effective way strategy when trying to fill a vacant position, that resource can become exhausted and put a great amount of stress on the people who are working overtime compensating for the vacancy. Building your network of contacts is most important. Although this may not guarantee a hire, it is certainly a worthwhile effort and may lead to something down the road.

While is in our nature to engage and interact with others, public speaking remains a difficult task for many Americans. To some people, networking can bestow a sense of vulnerability. Whether people find the concept of networking intimidating or they pride themselves on being social butterflies, the following top-two networking tips will assist you in building a quality list of contacts to reach out to when it comes time for filling a position or finding a job.

1. Develop an Online Network:

Social media allows us to network with people all over the world. LinkedIn.com is one of the most popular professional networking sites online today. Membership is free and it allows you to post your professional experience and education on the site in order to network with others. While working toward building up a network, it is important to actively use the discussion forums to alert your “connections” of either your hiring needs in the event that they know someone who meets the background you’re looking for. Another medium to utilize is Twitter. This form of social media allows you to “follow” other users updates in real-time. Many employers and recruiters use this as another outlet to post jobs and vacancies within the company.

2. Attend Networking Events:

While people’s schedules are full and it seems to be a challenge to find the time to get out and meet new people, it is necessary in order to network efficiently. Make it a goal to attend at least one networking event per month. When you do go, arrive early so you can identify who you want to speak with as they walk into the room. If time permits, speak with VIPs or speakers and be familiar with why they are receiving a particular recognition, etc. Try to

acknowledge your hiring need in a casual manner. Do not force the issue. The goal is to make quality contacts. If your hiring needs are discussed at one point, ask for referrals to excellent search firms or recruiters they may know. Even if a company decides not to use the referrals right away, they can be solutions for future hiring needs. It is important to get to know reputable recruiting partners to work with ahead of time.

As most experienced hiring managers can attest to, the cost of an open position goes beyond the financial ramifications to include opportunity costs and added stress that generally emerge when a critical position remains vacant for extended periods of time. While networking is traditionally associated with the objective of leveraging contacts for business relationships and sales, there is no reason why, in addition to networking for business, you cannot network for candidates and hires. Moreover, the talent is typically already employed and will not be found on most job boards. Networking requires commitment and patience. It is always best to begin building your list of contacts early on to allow you time to form valuable partnerships before asking for favors. Making the commitment to build your list of contacts in anticipation of soliciting them for assistance in the future will inevitably prove valuable.