



DISCOVERING POTENTIAL CONTACTS IN YOUR NETWORK

Discovering potential contacts in your network is an essential first step in the Job Search process, which can frequently lead to opportunities for specific jobs, referrals, or additional contacts. Students often comment on the fact that they have few contacts in their network that will be of benefit to their job search. However, it is easy to underestimate the number of contacts one has, and people often overlook many of their potential contacts. Once students start thinking of their networks from a different perspective, it is amazing how many people they actually know.

An easy way to help identify who makes up your network is to categorize the people you know into one of the following four types of connections:

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

These are the individuals that immediately come to mind and that you are most comfortable with. Your personal connections most likely know you best are able to describe your strengths and attributes. Common examples include your friends and family.

PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

It is through work, school and volunteering that you will realize who makes up your professional connections and these individuals will be able to confirm your employability skills. Your co-workers and supervisors from past and present employment as well as your professors, coaches and advisors are excellent examples of professional connections.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Involvement in clubs or groups outside of work will make up your contacts in this category. For instance, these may be people you know from a faith community, or university groups such as the Geography or Eco-club, or Student Union.

CHANCE CONNECTIONS

While these connections are individuals that will not know you as well, do not underestimate the influence of these contacts in your network. Chance connections such as guest speakers from classes, individuals at conferences or workshops, or customers from work can be of great value. (Expanding Your Horizons, 1999)

Listing your contacts will also allow you to identify which category you need to expand. For example, if you have only a couple of people in your “organizational category”, you may want to get involved in a group related to your career interests that will encourage you to meet more people.

After identifying the people that form your network, it is crucial that during your job search you communicate your career goals with as many of these individuals as possible.