

Networking beyond your graduation

BY ROBYN HENDERSON CSP

5 biggest mistakes graduates make when looking for employment!

Congratulations! You graduated with high grades, had a great social life whilst attending university, made lots of friends, some who will be lifelong connections. Even managed to save money juggling your part time job. But now the prospect of securing a permanent job in a tight marketplace is not looking optimistic.

Let's look at ways of increasing your chances of getting a job with your employer of choice.

1. Take a networking audit

The biggest mistake graduates make is not keeping track of their campus contacts. Smart networkers start building their connections from Day 1 of attending university, never knowing who they can help or who can help them. **They build their networks before they need them.** The bigger picture is, you have spent three or more years with a large group of people studying a variety of subjects at the same campus. Obviously some of your connections will be stronger than others; your network expands by the potential size of the campus, but only if you bother to make an effort to meet people along the way. It's not too late. Take time today to list the number of people in your network—regardless of whether you think they have contacts in the industries or professions you want to work in. Make sure your details are correct on the alumni listings.

2. Tell people what you are looking for

Be clear on what you want. BE pro-active with your job search. Don't waste people's time with a vague "I want a job!" Be specific: "I am looking for a graduate position in the banking and finance area; I know there is a freeze on hiring with some organisations, but I would like to make contact before the freeze is listed. Do you know anyone who works for XYZ or SSS (mentioning your employer of choice)?"

There are so many different ways of reaching your contacts today: *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube*, text messaging, emailing, phone calls and even the good old letter. Match your communication with the communication style preferred by your connection. Often messages go unanswered because they are in the wrong format. Obviously the above message will need to be shortened to suit the social media format, but the principle still applies: be clear on what you want.

3. Be prepared to be flexible

Have a master plan! This doesn't mean planning the next 50 years, but it does mean at least the next three to five years. Permanent full time work in some professions is a distant memory. Job share situations, 2-3 day contracts, seasonal high volume work followed by months of nothing, weekend work without penalty clauses—is potentially what the employment landscape will look like in the future. If you are adamant that you want a Monday to Friday, 9-5 role, with parking provided, high salary,

low expectations, you have a long wait ahead. Getting a toe in the door of your preferred employer with a part time or project based role allows them to see how good you are. Be prepared to work at one role and build your networks within the organisation so that once you have proved your worth, you will be in a great position to apply for other roles within your master plan.



Graduates who make the mistake of rigidly stick to their inflexible career plans often spend months, even years, looking for work. Yes, you will hear the phrase, "you are way too qualified for this role", so prepare a response that you believe will be acceptable to your potential employer.

4. Ask for help before you need it...

Possibly this article has been forwarded to you by someone who knows you will be looking for work in the future—fantastic—you won't make the mistakes. However, if you are spending hours online looking for work and not getting anywhere, make a list of people you respect and whom you consider to be industry experts. These may include your lecturers, campus staff members, current students active in alumni activity, social or special interest groups—people who you believe know about the industries where you are seeking work. Allocate a few days when you could meet with them or set up a time for a phone call with them. Don't make the mistake of being unprepared for this call. Email the 2-3 questions that you would like answers to. Their time is valuable; don't waste it.

5. Find work for someone else

The Universal Law of Reciprocity is one of three laws forming the basis of networking; what you give out comes back tenfold. If you want a job find a job for someone else. When you are studying the current jobs available on-line keep an eye out for one for another graduate mate of yours, whose needs are slightly different. If you miss out on a job, tell a mate about it. You might not be the ideal candidate but they might be the one.

Information is gold but only when you share it. And the best networkers are those who regularly share information, ideas, leads and help others with their needs. They know in their hearts that networking can open any door in the world for them once they are clear on what they want and make it easy for people to help them.

All the best with the job search. And when you meet current students at your campus encourage them to network BEFORE they need to.

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