

Introduction

Do we truly know the importance of networking in business and in the corporate world? In the past century we have seen the world evolve into a more dynamic social environment. In the past, landing a job was determined based on experience and on the profit an individual could bring to a company. While this still pertains today in acquiring a job, other aspects have come into play. As undergraduate students begin to approach graduation their surroundings emphasize the importance of networking and how a network can get a potential job faster than if there was no networking involved. It would be very interesting and beneficial for those whom already have graduated and are seeking future jobs to really understand the value that comes along with networking. It is constantly repeated over and over by peers to network, because this could be the deciding factor on whether or not a person gets a job. We are able to break down the importance of how networking can help an individual to find a job, how networking can help build professional relationships, how it can help a business in general, and why we must be constantly networking.

Networking Finds Jobs

The importance of networking is beginning to be engraved in the minds of everyone in today's business corporate world. We have to understand how networking helps to find a job. As Sridhar stated (2005), "Contacts with different clusters or groups would help your possibility of greater opportunities." Making connections with individuals who hold high positions in corporate companies can be an asset to your agenda. A person must not be

afraid of socializing with business men. In order to make an impression the individual must introduce themselves and in 30 seconds or less make the networking connection. The cliché statement of its not what you know but who you know really is true in present society. The job market is really competitive now a days and knowing the right people is what will land the job.

For example, a business graduate with less experience in the corporate world than most had the opportunity to meet with the CFO of Wells Fargo. This graduate took the initiative to build a relationship in which he taught the CFO about himself through trust. According to Washington Post writer Lynne Waymon, "It's about teaching and giving. Teaching people who you are...and what kind of opportunities to send your way. And it is about giving—listening so generously that you can also help people accomplish their goals." (Waymon, 2010) Now who do you think is more like to land a job in the finance department for Wells Fargo? Will it be the individual who is filled with tons of experience with an amazing resume or the individual who established an actual networking relationship? It is important to always remember to network in any given opportunity. Do not leave networking at the bottom of an important to do list, make networking a priority.

Networking takes practice and it is a skill that needs to be learned and mastered effectively. One of the main important aspects to networking is effective communication skills. In order to gain the trust of a prestigious corporate business person, one must have the social ability to converse in an enticing professional manner. Building confidence in what will be spoken and how it should be presented is very important as well. It could be very

beneficial to practice speaking in large groups and being noticeable by others. There are different business networking skills offered that could help someone who struggles with this issue of effective communication. Communicating effectively deals with having a plan on what the main networking target is. This will include some research in the specific department, company, or specific position. Figuring out this type of information is essential to carry an effective conversation. President of the executive search firm of the management advisory group William Simmons stated, "People often mistake it to be just handing out cards, but networking done right is sophisticated. It involves research; it involves getting to know people well; it involves following up." (Baker, 1993) This is beneficial advice that can apply in any given situation. If there is a lack of good communication skills, work hard and practice to develop these skills because that will be a step closer to higher networking opportunities.

There are many percentages floating around through the corporate world on the success rate of networking. Some say 70% of jobs are acquired through networking while others say it is as high as 80%. According to BH Careers International, "Eighty percent of available jobs are never advertised, and over half of all employees get their jobs through networking." Although these numbers are vague the percentages are all pretty high, which helps prove the importance companies and departments of labor are giving to networking. Only about one third of jobs are obtained through the old formal way of applying, interviewing and then getting hired. The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States also emphasizes the importance of having personal contacts to

obtain a potential job. "Be sure to tell people that you are looking for a job because the people you know may be some of the most effective resources for your search."

Does an individual that has a network connection have a greater possibility in acquiring a job? This question varies from time to time but essentially someone has a greater chance of getting a job if they know someone. This does not mean that automatically you have the job; a candidate has to go through the same hiring process as any other individual. According to a Harvard Business School Article, the hiring process has the objective to process and find a person whose skills, abilities, and personal characteristics suit the job. With this in mind a hiring manager will take into consideration to interview the candidate who has a network referral, but this application still has to meet the qualifications specified for the job position. An individual candidate needs to have a certain background. Factors that determine their qualifications would be education, work experience, functional experience, company experience, and personal factors. If the manager feels this candidate is right for the position he or she will be called in for an interview, then if the candidate is offered the job the process continues to on job training and so forth.

Networking Builds Professional Relationships

Nancy Patricia Lee said, "Economic growth, increased competition, and the emergence of global markets, as well as the increase and constant change of information and information sources, are making the need for networking of paramount importance. People need to

learn how to network for both business success and personal gain.” (Lee, 2008) One benefit of networking is building those relationships that help with business success and personal gain. Of course we don’t seek to merely take advantage of our networks to attain that success or gain.

Networking can be a win-win situation. Surely both sides have expectations and both sides want to gain something from the relationship. If used in this light then networking is beneficial for everyone. Unfortunately there are some that use networking to take advantage of others. They have built up the misconception that networking with others can be an inconvenience. Of course this may be true, but it doesn’t need to be. To avoid this terrible mistake don’t think about what you want from your network, think about what you can give.

Parker, a successful salesman, marketer and author said, “Networking is about giving to others. It could be giving your time, your attention, knowledge, or resources. Networking is about trying to make the people around you more successful. Show interest in what your network is doing, trying to do, or hoping to do and see how you might help them get a little further.” (Parker, 2011) A successful networker must be willing to give something and thereby make networking reciprocal. Have interest in the other person and be willing to listen. Professional relationships are built out of this form of networking.

It is good to have friends in lots of areas. In today’s constantly changing world it seems the only thing you can plan on is that life is unpredictable. Having a broad network will help you feel secure and be prepared for the unexpected. Likelihood is you already have a pretty broad network.

Think of your extended family. What are their professions? Where have they worked? Think of your friends. What are they doing? What you may not realize is you already have a network from relationships that have already been built.

Maintaining a contact is crucial to building your network and maintaining relationships. Keep track of those you’ve met. Bill Clinton told the New York Times that for most of his life at the end of the day he would make a 3X5 card for each person he had met that day. On this card he kept the important contact information and any other important information including how they met and what he had learned from that contact. (Tobey, 2008) In order for networking to build professional relationships we must find a way that works for us to maintain those relationships. This may be keeping 3x5 cards of our contacts, it may be sending out Christmas cards, or it may be sending articles periodically to our contacts. Find out what works and stick with it. If we have built these professional relationships then when the unpredictable happens and we may need help, our network will be willing to help us because that bond has already been built.

Networking Helps Your Business

Networking isn’t just for contacts; it is a business tool. Making valuable contacts is inadvertently also making contacts with another business. These other businesses may help you gain useful information regarding jobs, market intelligence, business opportunities, and valuable career information. So when you’re networking with individuals that work for other businesses you are simultaneously networking for your business.

Networking with other businesses helps your business gain legitimacy. Aribex, a manufacturing company that builds hand held x-ray machines, was a startup company less than 10 years ago. As they started they were receiving resumes from those with only a high school diploma. As Aribex grew they focused on networking. They joined organizations and councils. They sent their employees out to different seminars, fairs, and meetings. As their employees individually started networking their company became better known. People from these same councils as Aribex employees started sending business to Aribex, and they started recommending those who needed a job to this well-known company. Aribex now receives resumes that come with a high recommendation for Aribex. Also, most of the calls they receive regarding their hand-held x-ray machines come to them thanks to word of mouth, or networking. Aribex is still actively involving their employees in networking. Their Human Resource department continues to send employees to seminars with those in their field because they know that as the individual networks their business will also be networked. (C. Dayton, personal communication, November 3, 2011)

Your business can't do everything on its own. There is too little time, too much information, and too much competition. The truth is, in different areas your business is going to need help. Luckily, these business needs may be met by those you networked with. If you have a diversified network then you can help your business find the right consultant, banker, advertiser, etc. Of course finding the needed help can be done online, but if a relationship built on trust has already established then business will be made so much easier.

The Harvard Business Review reported that employees bring three things to the job if they know how to network, "Inside information, access to diverse skill sets so they can more easily get the job done, and power and influence since they know whom to call when they need a resource or have a problem." (DiDomenico, 2008) It's often said that employees are the greatest asset to a company. Well this is especially true if those employees know how to network. Through their networks they help the business they work for.

A recent Referral Institute study on business networking found there is a large correlation with the amount of time people spend networking and the amount of business that is generated by that time. This study found that people who reported networking playing a role in their success spent an average of 6.5 hours a week networking. (Misner, 2010) Networking with other businesses can help build your reputation and gain you favor. The more people talk about your business, the better it will be for your business. What better way to promote your business and get people talking about it than through networking with other businesses?

Dr Ivan Misner said, "Networking for business growth must be strategic and focused. Not everyone you meet can help you move your business forward – but everything you do can be driven by the intention to grow your business. You have total control over whom you meet, where you meet them and how you develop and leverage relationships for mutual benefit." (Misner, 2009) Acknowledging this control and using it in networking will help not only you, but your business as well.

The Importance of Constantly Networking

What comes after a person has acquired a job through networking? Does the focus of networking automatically stop? Besides networking to have higher chances in an opportunity for a corporate job it is important to continue to seek networks even within the company a person already works for. Stated by the Harvard Business Review, "Work since the 1970's shows that people who maintain certain kinds of networks do better. They are promoted more rapidly than their peers, make more money, are more likely to find a job if they lose their own, and are more likely to be considered high performers." (DiDemonic, 2008) This review by the Harvard Business has a significant impact and meaning, they clearly level out how important it is to constantly network.

Reach out to co-workers within the company especially those who have higher positions with greater influences, because they will be the ones who will see your work ethics and achievements. Also, making connections with people who have less connections of their own can be beneficial as well because they may have ideas and exposure to things that have not been presented elsewhere. How can an individual benefit from this? They can network together effectively and piece together these opportunities that less networked colleagues have. A former BYU undergraduate student, who works as a planning analyst for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints gave the advice that creating strong impression in your workplace is highly important. There are opportunities to network every day in the workplace with colleagues and peers. It is important to remember that networking constantly will lead to building a career.

Building a career takes a lot of motivation and discipline to be able to socially communicate. Networking can offer a rewarding path to the building of a career. As mentioned before a network connection can help advance placements within a corporate job. If an individual is a marketing coordinator and their ultimate career goal is to become VP of the marketing department in his company, he has to network with the right people that will help mentor him to succeed in eventually acquiring the VP position. This takes time and can be an instant opportunity growth or it can be a slower process but initially the result will be a successful career path. Remember to keep options open as well. This means it's crucial to network in your current occupation but also with other companies and resources. It is never definite when or where an opportunity may appear. This is why people advise having a broad variety of networks in other corporate companies. In keeping options open the most effective way to leave an impression with your networks is to be memorable. As you network, brand your image.

How can a person brand their image and make an impression among peers? To begin a person must have a resume that packages skills and experience. Without having a strong resume it can be even more difficult for someone to leave an impression. The first thing people look at when first meeting someone is appearance. This may seem to be something as little as how you approach a potential person to network with. It is important to be professional, look professional, and act professional. When meeting face to face remember to have good manners and be polite. In the corporate business world, it's all about selling yourself and your image. In

essence this means to be marketable. Be a unique individual that will leave an impression within their network.

Conclusion – Networking is important

Networking is important. Networking can help you find a job. Networking will build your career and keep your options open. Networking will help you build professional relationships. Networking can help not only you, but your business. In order for one to be successful in today's business world it is absolutely crucial that they use networking and apply it constantly. Maybe the habits of networking are unfamiliar to you right now. Here are a five simple steps for networking from Nancy Patricia Lee's article, "*The Need for Networking Training in Academic Environments.*"

Set the stage. Set goals for networking. In what areas should you be networking? Who would be willing and able to help you in these areas? Do they share common or similar interests? Will they help support and inform you? Before you network you must first know who is who. For the most part networking will not happen simultaneously or by happenchance. Networking is not a matter of luck, it's a matter of hard work. Find who you want to network with and create that stage. Plan ahead and this will help you be proactive and confident.

Take initiative. Once you've decided who to meet and why then you must take initiative. Introduce yourselves. Lee suggests, "plan and practice making a thirty-second commentary about [yourself], that will include such information as: name, what [you] do, and, if possible, something interesting." Of course this must be flexible to fit the situation you're in. After this is

over try and engage in small talk. Ask about the other person. Then, actively listen.

Leverage contacts and opportunities. Once you start really networking you will find how quickly your number of contacts can grow. Find those individuals that are willing to introduce you to new people. Make contacts from your contacts and watch as your network explodes!

Follow through. How often have you met someone and then forgotten completely about them by the next week or even the next day? If possible, find some way to contact them the next day. Thank them for their time, send them an article you thought they'd be interested in, and most importantly find a reason to keep in touch. Remember your contacts. (Lee, 2008)

These steps make networking sound easy. The sad truth is networking isn't easy for a number of reasons. It's hard to make the first move and introduce oneself rather than be introduced. It is hard to stand out and not be perceived as pushy or aggressive. It's hard to have the confidence to make these connections. If you're new to networking it's going to be difficult at first. Don't let this scare you off. You may be intimidated at first and think you don't have the time. It does not matter how busy you are, networking should be a constant important factor.

What you may not realize is that you already have a network; you just need to be make it legitimate now. Go through old contacts. Reconnect with former friends. Look at those around you in your community and make connections there. Think about contacting your school alumni; you already have something in common with them and usually they're willing to help you out. Lastly, look at unexpected

encounters as a way to network. You can find the best contacts sitting next to you on a plane, waiting in line by you at Disneyland, or sitting near you at a restaurant. My friend was sitting next to a complete stranger on a plane ride. She struck up a conversation with him and found out that he was a renowned landscaper. It just so happens that her brother-in-law was in that profession and currently out of work. One week later he was working under her new airplane friend.

The most important aspect of networking is to be you. It's important to meet new people, but that means nothing if they don't remember you. Be yourself and be distinctive. Kathy Jo Polluck said, "There is no better time than now to strengthen or build your network. A solid network will serve you well for years to come and will be an additional tool in your toolbox during these times of economic uncertainty." (Polluck, 2007) Don't get left behind. Network.

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