

SECTION II

Networking

Networking is a crucial part of any job search and will be an invaluable tool in every aspect of your life going forward. Networking consists not only of contacting people you know, but also reaching out through those individuals to their contacts. One of your most important assets in a job search is a network of contacts.

The way we network has evolved over the years and now includes in-person and online networking, which means that it is now critical to evaluate both your physical and online presence when you begin your job search.

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

In-Person

How do you present yourself? Do you have the proper interview wardrobe? One good business suit and one good business casual look are what you need before you begin meeting with people. Always dress for your audience, not yourself. If you are going to a law firm where there is a dress code, wear business attire; for an informal meeting, wear business casual. You should always be over, not under-dressed.

Online

What comes up when you search your name online? What does your social media presence say about you? You should always assume that someone will “google” you before meeting you, so your online presence should reflect the image you want to present to the world. Edit what needs to be edited.

Sites such as LinkedIn are critical to your job search. LinkedIn is now used by more than 560 million people in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide. The site was designed specifically for professional networking. If you are conducting a job search, it is essential to be on LinkedIn.

Developing Your Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is your “personal statement”. It sums up who you are professionally and should be delivered in a very short period of time – the time it would take for you to share an elevator ride with someone. Remember that this is a crucial way for you to make a first impression, so it should always be positive, concise and directed.

There are a few distinct things to keep in mind when developing your pitch:

1. Clearly state your purpose – what kind of position do you want?
2. Write it down – what do you want employers to know about you? What skills and accomplishments do you want to highlight? What experience can you bring to the table? After drilling down on this information, begin editing and keep editing until you have just a few bullet points that become your core message.
3. Prepare – read your pitch out loud. Try it out on your family and friends.

A good elevator pitch should always include the following three questions: Who are you? What do you do? What are you looking for?

Who Do You Know?

The idea of networking can be overwhelming but the reality is that we do it nearly every day. Whenever we ask for referrals or recommendations, we are networking. When starting your job search, you should sit down and make a list of everyone in your life – friends, family, colleagues, service providers, etc. Which of these people are personally invested in you? Who are you willing to ask for help? Think of this process as planting seeds. While none of them may be attorneys, they all are likely to know an attorney or know someone who knows an attorney. Plant the idea that you are looking for a new job and, with a little persistence, watch your network grow.

There are numerous other ways to expand your network. The CDO has names of alumni who are willing to serve as mentors and guides through your job search process.

What Should You Say?

The first rule of networking for job search is: Always be prepared. Make a point of doing your homework before you reach out or meet with someone. Google them – know who they are, what they do, and what their company does. The more prepared you are, the more impressive you will be.

The first step is to ask for a meeting. You should not be asking for a job at this point – you are there to get information. Ask if you can meet to get their opinion or “pick their brains”. If someone feels like they may be able to provide information, they are more likely to be willing to meet you.

You should always make the meeting about the other person, not you. You are there to get information. Ask about their background; how they ended up at their firm or organization; what their day-to-day activities look like. **Always ask if there is anyone else with whom they would recommend you meet.** It is okay to ask if you can send them your resume, but do so in the context of asking for feedback as you begin your job search.

Finally, be mindful of their time. This person is doing you a favor, so don't overstay your welcome. Try to keep the meeting to the amount of time it would take to grab a cup of coffee.

Follow up

Always be sure to follow up your meeting with a thank you email. Your email should be clear, concise, and well-written. Follow up on any leads or suggestions they offer and report back. Make sure they feel that their time was well-spent.