

**SUCCESS+HAWK**<sup>®</sup>  
JOB SEARCH PRODUCTIVITY SOLUTIONS



*10 Steps to Landing a  
Great Job*

*A Guide to Professional  
Networking*



**10** Steps to Landing a Great Job: A Guide to Professional Networking is an overview of 10 simple steps you can take to build, develop and successfully interact with your professional network using SuccessHawk.

### What is professional networking?

Professional networking is the process of identifying, building and maintaining relationships with people willing to help you during your career. Successful networking involves making connections in exchange for something beneficial to the other person.

Your network may include family members, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, alumni from your alma mater, fellow association members, members of online communities or people with whom you share a similar background, interests or education.

**Remember:** Networking is a two-way process. One part involves asking for favors; the other part involves giving back to those who are helping you. Both are equally important. Professional networking only works when it is mutually beneficial to both parties. Always think about what you can do to help others at the same time you ask their help with your career. The help can be as simple as a “thank you” or you might provide information or recommendations that help the other person in their own career.

### Why is networking important?

Job search experts agree that business networking is the most effective method of finding and landing a great job.

Networking helps you access the “hidden job market.” Experts estimate that as many as 80% of jobs are never advertised but are found through leads and referrals from personal connections. Why is this the case? Most people—even hiring managers—are more comfortable working with someone who is referred by a trusted source.

Effective networking brings you to the attention of hiring managers directly and puts you way ahead of other potential candidates who might also want that job. The more people you connect with, the greater the chances of your hearing about opportunities.

Besides helping you find a great job now, a good business network generates connections that will benefit you for the rest of your career. Sooner or later, almost every person who is employed will have job or career changes. The changes can be voluntary or involuntary, planned, or sudden and unplanned. Regardless of the circumstances, networking and staying connected will help you.

In a tight job market, where competition for jobs is intense, and hundreds of resumes are submitted for most openly advertised jobs, it is essential to have a plan, keep organized and connect with as many people who can help you as possible.

As business guru Mark McCormack says, “All things being equal, people will do business with a friend. All things being unequal, people will *still* do business with a friend.”

**Remember:** Successful professional networking requires planning, focus, a structured process for managing your efforts, polite persistence and a lot of follow-up.

This guide will start you on the right path to launch and work your own professional network—and, most importantly, lead you to a great job. Good luck!

# 1

## Create your Personal Profile and Personal Statement

Your Personal Profile helps you define who you are and the skills and interests you offer a potential employer. The information you record here will be used by SuccessHawk to help you keep track of the interests you share with people in your professional network. This information is for your use only and is not shared by SuccessHawk with anyone.

People generally feel most comfortable with others who share similar interests or with whom they have something in common. Shared interests can include where you grew up and went to college, your interest in sports, social activities or people you both know. Shared interests help open doors and facilitate conversation.

In a first telephone call, the subject line of an introductory email or a formal cover letter, shared interests can be an excellent conversation starter and icebreaker. Because they last over time, shared interests are important to record.

A Personal Statement, also known as a 30-second elevator pitch, summarizes your strongest attributes, your achievements and ways you can benefit a potential employer. It summarizes why someone should want to hire you. It is brief and to the point. SuccessHawk helps you create it with an interactive Personal Statement builder.

Having a well-crafted Personal Statement helps you respond easily and quickly when someone says, "Tell me about yourself."

# 2

## Identify Your Job and Career Options

Whether you are starting out or starting over, you will benefit from knowing about occupations and careers that match your interests. There are likely to be many careers that may be right for you. During your job search, you owe it to yourself to identify, explore and then focus on jobs and careers that match your interests, personality and skills.

Completing a career assessment is a helpful way to identify occupations that match your interests and skills.

In the Career Exploration section of SuccessHawk, you will find a link for the Holland Self-Directed Search (available in mid-April 2009.) In this section, there are also links that provide easy access to US Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics databases that contain detailed information about specific careers and industries including employment trends and forecasts.

**Remember:** Pursue opportunities at organizations that matter to you most and jobs to which you can add value.

# 3

## Determine Who You Know and Who Can Help You

Specifically, whom do you know who can help you find a job doing what you want to do? Who are the people who have an interest in seeing you succeed? Who are the people who can help you launch, advance, or restart your career? Creating a list of these people is the starting point in building your professional network.

Be sure to include in your professional network *anyone* and *everyone* who can help you. Almost everyone already has an existing network. Here are some ideas for identifying people who can help you and expanding your network.

- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Friends of your family and families of your friends
- Former colleagues, co-workers and employers
- Connections on *LinkedIn*, *Plaxo*, *Facebook* and other social networking sites
- Fellow alumni—a great resource—are usually predisposed to help other alumni
- Classmates, roommates, sorority sisters, fraternity brothers
- Faculty members who have contacts with potential employers
- Members of your professional associations, religious organization, clubs, teams or other organizations who can provide introductions
- Job search support organizations
- Networking events and career fair contacts
- Industry trade shows—meet fellow attendees and influential speakers before and after sessions and meet exhibitors *during* sessions when most attendees are in sessions
- For students *and* alumni: employer contacts from your college career services center

When you start networking it is important to start with people you know. It is easier to talk with friends and family when you begin the process. With them, you can practice and perfect your networking skills without anxiety. Regardless, even when you are contacting friends, you need to prepare before you start. Be clear about what you want and what you have to offer so they can understand specifically how to help you.

## 4 Enter Your Contacts into SuccessHawk

Enter the contacts you identified above into SuccessHawk. You can seamlessly import contacts from an external source, such as *Outlook* or *LinkedIn*, by clicking the **Import Contacts** button on your Workspace. You can also add contacts individually with the **Add Contact** button.

Include as much information as you can about each contact. Be sure to include information about your connection with that person and common interests such as college attended, clubs, sports, etc.

At a minimum, record the person's full name, company name, email address and telephone number(s).

## 5 Start Connecting

Now it's time to start reaching out to people in your network for help with your job search. Though your first networking emails or calls can be awkward, keep in mind that they will be easier as you make more and more of them. That's why it is best to ease into networking by starting with calls to family and friends.

When you begin, you may find it helpful to prepare and practice a brief script on what to say after you say hello. SuccessHawk will help you with this. The system provides icebreakers and questions to ask. Begin by saying who suggested you make contact or what your connection is. Use your personal statement to introduce yourself and what you can offer a potential employer. During these initial calls you are reaching out to learn all you can about potential employment possibilities and letting people know that you are available.

## Interviews

Planning networking emails and calls is essential. Think through:

- How are you going to introduce yourself?
- Why are you making contact?
- What is your strategy for creating interest in you?
- What benefits do you bring?
- What are your common interests or affiliations with this person?
- If the person agrees to help you, what specific questions will you ask?

Practice your personal statement over and over until you can introduce yourself in a conversational way.

Make appointments for either an in-person meeting or a telephone interview with your contact so that you can ask questions, listen and learn.

At this stage, make it very clear that you are you are not asking your contact for a job; rather that you are looking for information about what might be available and where you need to focus your attention. Be sure you tell the contact what you want to take away from the call. Finally, ask how you, in turn, can help them.

Remember, people are busy with their own work; be respectful of that and ask for only 20 minutes of their time. **Hint:** once they begin talking, they'll probably give you a lot more than that!

### Tip

#### **Remember that networking is not just about you.**

When you talk with people, learn about them, their family, their interests, their job, and their career. Make notes. When you reconnect to thank them and follow-up, be sure to mention something about what you learned and also give them something helpful. This could be new industry information, an interesting article, a book you've read, or a connection with another person you think they should meet.

Every time you connect with someone you should be listening for ways you can help them. Giving back is the "grease" that makes networking work and the reason to re-connect.

## Informational Interviews

If you are just starting your job search, planning to change careers, or re-entering the job market, your first interviews are likely to be informational interviews intended to help you gather information and make decisions about what direction to pursue; not to ask for a job. Informational interviews will help you build confidence in describing who you are and what you have to offer. Most important, they are a primary source of referrals to build and

expand your professional network and lead quickly and efficiently to real job opportunities.

As with any interview, do your homework so you can speak about your contact's organization and industry knowledgably. The more you know upfront, the more meaningful the conversation will be and the stronger the impression you will make. SuccessHawk will prompt you with suggested questions to use until you build your own set of questions.

To learn more about the organization, visit the website, search for articles written about it, read professional journals related to the organization's business, and attend trade shows where they exhibit. Remember, too, to check out competing organizations not only as a source of information to discuss but also for potential employment.

During an informational interview:

- Listen closely to the answers to your questions and jot down extensive notes.
- Always ask for two or three referrals to other contacts, a few details about the referrals to help you personalize your call when you reach out to those people and permission to mention that your current contact referred you to them.
- Of course, if your contact mentions an available job opportunity that is of interest, jump at the opportunity to learn more!

As you become more skilled in networking conversations, you will find that your goals evolve from strictly gathering information to discussing specific job opportunities in organizations that interest you. Opportunities will emerge as you work through your contacts and make new connections. SuccessHawk asks you to note opportunities in every interview. If you respond positively, the contact's color-coding will change to alert you that they represent actual opportunities worth pursuing.

Job opportunity interviews are discussed in Step 7.

**Tips**

If someone won't talk with you, doesn't have time or takes too long to respond, move on. Don't waste your time or theirs. More people will help than not. Find people willing to help.

At first networking calls can be hard to make; however, they do work. Set a personal goal to make five or six calls or send five or six emails each day. Your persistence will pay off as your network expands. If five or six calls or emails feel like too many at the outset, start with two or three and build from there.

If you initiate contact with a referral by email, remember to make your subject line informative and compelling. For example, "Brian Jones suggested I contact you" or "Fellow Maryland Terp interested in your company."

Be sure to send a personalized thank you note within 24 hours of finishing an informational interview. It is fine to send the thank you by email but a handwritten note may help you stand out.

## 6 Follow Up

Following up is an essential ingredient of successful networking.

After a networking conversation, you will have to make specific follow-up actions. At a minimum, write a personalized thank you note or email. Other follow-up actions will depend on what you discussed or promised during the informational interview.

After each networking conversation or informational interview, be sure to follow through on commitments you made during the interview. Did you agree to:

- Provide more information?
- Send a resume?
- Contact someone else?
- Get back in touch with the contact?
- Take a particular action, such as signing up for a class or joining a professional association the person recommended?

Why is follow-up so important? Most people you've asked to help you have busy lives with their own agendas, schedules and priorities. Besides being a matter of courtesy, following up diligently puts you back on that person's to-do list.

Effective follow-up can be a simple reminder, such as:

"We talked last week. I'm just checking to see whether you can send me the information about Mr. X or Ms. Y whom you recommended I contact."

or

"You mentioned in our conversation that XYZ Corporation might have a job where I'd be a good fit. I am checking back with you to be sure you received the resume I sent and to learn more about the opportunity. I've been researching the company online and have a few questions."

SuccessHawk provides several possible follow-up reminders like these that are tied directly to the specific contacts you've been making. Simply adapt the most appropriate version to your situation.

Above all, don't be discouraged if people don't get back to you immediately or not at all. Remember, everyone is busy. And they will forget—even your friends. Don't assume that the lack of immediate response is a sign they don't care or won't help in the future when they have more time.

Promising leads often disappear. That's okay. Other people may provide a wealth of helpful information, recommendations, leads and referrals. The good thing about networking is that most people do want to help. Often a gentle reminder about the help that was offered is all it takes to get the responses you wanted.

## 7 Prioritize and Target Job Opportunities

During your first round of initial conversations and informational interviews, you are likely to uncover a number of job opportunities. If so, focus your attention on the ones that

sound promising and appealing so you can prioritize effective follow-up calls or emails that may eventually lead to job interviews.

If you learn of a job opening during an informational interview that is of interest, shift the interview from gathering information to addressing the specific opportunity. Learn as much as you can about the job and explain briefly how your background, skills, interests and knowledge make you suitable for it. Ask for a job description—it will help you understand what the job entails so that you better prepare yourself for further interviews.

If your contact suggests that you need to speak with someone else, make sure to request the name and contact information of that person and ask your contact to recommend you directly to that person. Then add this new contact to your network as an *Opportunity* and follow up to request an interview.

When you identify a job opportunity, continue conducting informational interviews but put job opportunities at the top of your priority list.

Follow up regularly. Be politely persistent. When you follow up with a contact regarding a job opportunity, be enthusiastic about the position and explain what particularly interests you about the job and offer specific ideas for ways you can benefit the organization.

**Tip**

When you follow up, send your contact new information about yourself, additional information about something you discussed or news about a common interest. For example, mention or send a recent news article, book or video on a topic of shared interest.

**8****Ace Your Interviews**

Hearing about an actual job opportunity is the payoff of effective informational interviewing. When you learn of a potential job opening, act promptly to contact the referral or the potential employer. At this stage of your job search, every contact you have with potential employers puts you closer to landing the position you want.

If the contact you made during an informational interview will personally refer you (through an email or phone call) to a hiring manager, that referral alone will help you access the hiring manager.

**Tip**

There are times when a face-to-face meeting with a potential employer can uncover jobs that are not yet posted. Be alert for this. Often, after an employer meets a highly skilled candidate and evaluates his or her abilities and potential value to the company, a way is found to hire that person.

**Prepare. Prepare. Prepare.**

The importance of being well prepared for a job interview cannot be overstated.

The SuccessHawk Interviewing section will help you anticipate common questions asked by interviewers—and some uncommon questions.

Review the job description. This will help you understand what the job entails and the most important requirements that the employer is looking for in a candidate. It will enable you to think about your own experience, knowledge and skills that you want to highlight during the interview. You may decide to rework parts of your resume to further accentuate those characteristics.

Find out whether individuals or a team of people will interview you at the same time.

Redouble your efforts to learn as much as you can about the company and how the job or the department can contribute to the company's success. Review what you learned about the organization, their competition and their business environment. Are there news articles or press releases about recent developments that might positively or negatively affect their willingness to hire?

**Remember:** The interview is less about you and more about what you can do for the employer. What strengths will you bring to the company? Be specific. When they hire you, what can you contribute and how will they benefit?

Stay positive. Be enthusiastic!

## 9 Close the deal !

Receiving a job offer feels absolutely fantastic. Let the hiring manager know how excited you are and how confident you are that he or she has made a good decision. Even if you're sure you want the job, ask the manager for 24 hours to consider the offer.

## 10 Thank everyone who helped you

When you do accept a job offer, be sure to let everyone who helped you along the way know. Say thank you to everyone who helped you get this far. Everyone in your professional network will enjoy feeling that they contributed to your success.

Always remember that networking doesn't end when you land your job. Networking is an ongoing, career-long activity. Update SuccessHawk periodically with new information about yourself (e.g., new skills, new courses, new relevant experiences, something you've recently read or seen that may interest other people.) Your networking contacts have an interest in you. Above all, remember that networking must be mutually beneficial. Be willing to help other people as they have helped you.

### Reminder About Contacts Who Can Help You Build Your Network

Remember to include any of the following people who might be able to introduce you to people in your chosen field.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Family members and their friends                                     | Faculty advisors  |
| Relatives  | Teachers  |
| Neighbors  | Colleagues  |
| Friends and their relatives  | Former managers   |
| Roommates  | Former coworkers  |
| Classmates   | Members of teams, clubs, or community organizations     |
| Alumni   | Members of professional organizations                   |
| Sorority sisters   | People in your email address book                       |
| Fraternity brothers  | People in your mobile phone                             |
| Members of your social network:<br>Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc. | Employer opportunities from your school's career center |
| Referrals from new contacts  |   |

Remember to always ask for recommendations about additional people to contact.

### *A note from SuccessHawk*

SuccessHawk is committed to helping you network successfully. If you find yourself stuck and not making progress toward landing the job that you want, please let us know. Our goal is to provide resources that will help you throughout your entire career. Your success is our success.