

## **Networking for Introverts: Yes, You Can and Yes, You Must**

*Elaine Voci, Ph.D. Life Coach*

*11805 North Pennsylvania Street, Ste 136*

*Carmel, IN*

*317- 730-5481*

Networking is an essential component of an effective job search; it is proven to be one of the most effective ways to uncover the “hidden job market” - jobs that are not yet advertised and may potentially contain the job of your dreams. In spite of the Internet and online job banks, it is still “who you know” that will help you land your new position. But if you are a shy introvert who would rather have dental surgery without pain medicine than talk to people you don’t know about yourself and your job aspirations, it can seem daunting. Fear not, there is hope for you – in fact, you have an advantage over your extroverted competitors in the job market.

Networking allows you to play to your strengths as an introvert because you are naturally inclined to keep the focus on the other person by asking good questions, and by being a great listener. This winning combination generates productive and informative conversations that give you useful and practical information to pursue as you continue your job search. Have enough of these network conversations and you will find yourself at the level where jobs are offered to qualified candidates, like yourself, who have discovered opportunities and diligently pursued them.

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you approach a networking meeting:

1. Recognize that being an introvert gives you a distinct advantage in your search efforts - because you are a great listener and can turn the focus off yourself and onto your interviewee.
2. Remind yourself that marketing your unique talents is actually doing your community a service – there are companies out there who need to know about you and your unique skills and who will want to hire you to help them once they realize you can help them succeed with their mission.
3. Develop a list of 5-6 questions that you can ask people during the networking meeting. As you have these questions in your mind, they will serve as a script and it will be easier to talk to people. Always end the session by asking for the names of at least three other people you can contact for networking.
4. Never try to sell yourself. Always come from your very natural “How can I serve you?” place. Your purposes are to gather information, make contacts and learn

more about your field of interest, and in the process, to build good relations along the way, and help others whenever you can.

5. Consider joining a very structured business-networking meeting group in your community, such as BNI (Business Network International). The structure will give you comfort and the people there will want to help you find work in your chosen field.
6. Make sure you have one-on-one meetings with potential referral sources you meet and like – including ones you may meet in the business networking group. Good referral sources are those who can help you find work in your chosen field. If possible, plan to have at one or two one-on-one meetings a week.
7. Always thank those who met with you – send a prompt “thank you for meeting with me” note. Mention something specific that the person told you, taught you or provided advice to you about in your note. Form a strategy to gently stay in touch with those you like. As you build relationships through networking, you will eventually land your new job and then you can stay in touch with the people who helped you get there and include them in the new network associated with your new career.
8. Keep good notes, including the date and place where you met the person; key pointers each person gave you; the names of referrals and their contact information; the date when you mailed your handwritten thank you note, etc.
9. Create an accountability system for your networking efforts – a set of concrete goals you review regularly with your coach to keep you moving toward the career you really want. Set goals for each coaching session and know that these goals will help you reach your target.