Networking

It is estimated that around 70% of jobs are not advertised. Networking is one of the most valuable and powerful strategies a job seeker can employ to access these ‘hidden’ jobs. Networking involves identifying and making contact with people and organisations to assist your job search. It is a two way process—you should look for ways to help those who help you.

Who to network with

Everyone you know is a potentially valuable contact. If you think about all the people you know, then add all the people they know...you start to see that there are many people who could assist you.

Begin by listing:
- friends, family and acquaintances
- neighbours
- fellow students and alumni
- work colleagues—past and present
- sporting and other mutual interest contacts
- teachers, tutors and lecturers.

The list will grow once you start talking to people.

Grow your network

Things you can do to grow your network:
- Join a professional association and attend professional development seminars, discussion forums and information evenings. Many have student chapters on campus and mentoring programs.
- Attend conferences, workshops and exhibitions relevant to your chosen industry.
- Join your alumni and maintain contact with your fellow students.
- Do voluntary, temporary or casual work—wherever you will meet people.
- Use online networking sites like LinkedIn to build and manage contacts.
- Mentoring programs at RMIT - visit www.rmit.edu.au/careers/mentoring

Prepare to network

The aim of networking is to gather information and ideas about jobs, organisations and employment trends and to meet people who may be in a position to hire you, alert you to vacancies or provide you with referrals to other contacts. It always involves you communicating with someone about yourself and your needs.

- Know and be ready to discuss your skills, interests and career aspirations.
- Practise introducing yourself and being an attentive listener.
- Before meeting with a new contact, research them and the organisation they work for.
- Prepare some questions to ask.

Some areas of interest to discuss may include:
- current trends in the industry
- the culture of the organisation
- career structure/opportunities in the profession/company
- skills valued by the employer
- where your skills might contribute to the company
- ways of getting into the profession/company
- other contacts that may be useful
- how he/she entered into the field
- professional publications that might be useful to read
- companies in the field that are expanding
- general advice and information.

Business cards

Even if you don’t have a job, you need a business card. It should include your:
- name
- contact address
- telephone and email
- LinkedIn URL (or other online profile) if you have one
- qualifications.

Keep the cards others give you and remember to later write some notes about the contact on the back. Keep a file and follow up with these contacts throughout the year.
**Skills for successful networking**

You need the ability to:
- leave your comfort zone
- initiate introductions
- talk with strangers
- use open questions
- request and accept feedback
- follow up leads, ask for assistance
- be persistent (don’t give up!)
- be enthusiastic—show people how determined you are to succeed
- be organised.

**Networking via the internet**

The internet is a valuable networking tool. Sites such as LinkedIn are set up to facilitate networking for professional purposes. Many people also have their profile on a social networking site such as Facebook. Be aware that many employers are viewing these to inform their impression of potential recruits. Take care that the information you provide will only enhance their opinion of you.

**Further information**

For more information on how LinkedIn can help you build your network and get you noticed by employers, visit [www.university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students](http://www.university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students)

Visit the [Careers toolkit](http://www.rmit.edu.au/careers/toolkit) website for more networking tips, a global job search engine, videos and other careers information.