

Networking

With accumulating experience and success--enhanced by good mentoring along the way--you will reach a point in your career when more junior scientists could benefit from your insight, too. This happened to John Fetzter, of Pinole, California, an analytical chemist in the petroleum industry who founded Fetzpahs Consulting in 2002. Fetzter describes some of the intangible rewards of being a mentor in an article called "Once You Get There or Think You Have ... Mentoring to Pass on the Torch," published in *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry*. Those rewards include the satisfaction of knowing that others value your opinions and knowledge, the sense that your career successes are being recognized, and the satisfaction of giving back.

"Each of us has been mentored and guided by others in our careers," says Fetzter. "A way of acknowledging those that helped us is to help others in a similar fashion."

Tooling Up: More than Just a Job-Seeking Skill

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Networking Ability Forecasts Future Career Success

"Networking is a constant process of giving and receiving--of asking for and offering help. By putting people in contact with one another, by giving your time and expertise and sharing them freely, the pie gets bigger for everyone." - Keith Ferrazzi, author of *Never Eat Alone*

Every now and then, despite all that has been written about networking on Next Wave and in the lay press, some brave soul will actually admit that he doesn't quite understand what networking is, exactly. And that's okay, because it isn't taught in grad school. In fact, it doesn't show up on the radar screen of most professors.

That always baffled me until I realized that many faculty believe that networking is, at best, just another job-seeking tool, something that the graduate career center--if there is one--should teach. But before you relegate networking to the dust bin of job skills that get used five or six times in a lifetime, read my definition: *Networking is the process of establishing links between people with the intent to promote communication for mutual benefit.*

Would you say that establishing links with others would work best if done only on an every-now-and-again basis? Or does it make more sense to foster and nurture these connections so that, in time, they become stronger and even more useful?

Networking Is a Learnable Skill Like Any Other

Behavioral psychologists say that there are three phases to learning a new skill. The first phase is being inept: You are very aware of your incompetence. In the second phase you may have mastered the skill, but you remain conscious of every minute aspect of the process. You watch your performance closely, never allowing your conscious mind to stray from your newly acquired technique. In the third and final stage, which takes a long time to achieve, you master the skill to such a degree that you take it on completely unconsciously, allowing your thoughts to move on to more pressing matters even as you put your new skill into effective practice.

It is this third phase that Keith Ferrazzi, successful businessman and author, believes we need to reach to truly appreciate the power of networking. His new book, *Never Eat Alone* (Currency-Doubleday, 2005), takes networking from a job-seeking tool to a philosophy. Along the way the reader gains a much better understanding of why those who are in the top 1% of their fields--whether science or finance--consider networking crucial to their success.

What Phase Have You Reached in Learning to Network?

Think about what it was like when you were 16 or 17 years old, and you were learning to drive your parents' car. When you first got in that driver's seat, your mother or father beside you, you were almost paralyzed by a feeling of total incompetence. Put yourself in that picture and remember how you felt when you got behind the wheel, entering phase one of the learning process.

Many scientists experience this feeling again when they are told by their career advisors that they must "get out there and network" to secure a job. Some struggle with it; they make a few contacts with friends, socialize at conferences, but end up relying mostly on other skills that they are more comfortable with.

They'll sit quietly applying online to companies instead of facing up to the discomfort of learning a critical new technique. In short, they never make it past that first phase.

Others move beyond the fear to develop their job-search network, but remain uncomfortable while they are out there making contacts. They are so uncomfortable that they stop networking once they land their jobs. While they may have made it to the second phase, they never go any further. They put away their networking skills until they need them again for their next job search.

Finally, there are those who push past the initial discomfort and recognize that the process of networking goes on forever, in many aspects of professional life, and not only at job-search time. Networking at scientific conferences--something they do unconsciously--leads to new opportunities for collaboration, invitations to lecture, unsought job offers, and other good things.

At this stage they realize that the benefits of networking are not only professional; they value their contacts, many of whom have turned into lifelong friends and acquaintances. For people who make it to phase three, networking is as essential as any other communication skill, and it is unconsciously integrated into their daily routine. Just like driving a car, you reach a point where you don't even think about it any longer.

Where Does a Network Begin?

Because, oftentimes, the immediate and perhaps only goal is to find a job, inexperienced networkers often view contacts inside companies as valuable. In actuality, job leads can come from just about any direction, many of them surprising.

Never Eat Alone reminded me how large our initial networks--the ones most of us start out with before we consciously start to network--really are. I used to talk about this in my networking seminars, and it was refreshing to hear Mr. Ferrazzi describe it: friends, relatives, friends of relatives, relatives of friends, your spouse's or significant other's relatives and acquaintances, current and former colleagues, members of professional and social organizations, past and present neighbors, people you went to school with, church members, former teachers and employers, people you socialize with, and people who provide a service or sell you products. It's a long list, from people in your neighborhood, to the salespeople who sell you reagents, to people from far away that you may only have met on the Internet.

Still, many scientists exhaust these contacts in the first few weeks and then wonder where to go next. At this point a sudden shift takes place. No longer are you contacting friends or people with whom you have a mutual acquaintance. You've entered what I call the "cold call zone."

Gems From An Expert: Networking Tips from *Never Eat Alone*

- Never keep score. If your interactions are ruled by generosity, your rewards will follow.
- Your relationships with others are your finest, most credible expression of who you are and what you have to offer.
- Give your time and expertise freely. It is like Miracle-Gro® for networks.
- The best time to build a network is before you need it.
- Do your homework. Never pick up the phone or plan an introduction before knowing as much as possible about your contact.
- There's no need to ponder who picks up the lunch check. Generosity is the key to success.
- With networking, it's better to give before you receive.
- Don't come to the party empty-handed. You're only as good as what you give away.
- Social scientists are proving that people who are more connected with other people live longer and are healthier.

Succeeding in the Cold Call Zone

In one of her novels, author Marilyn French wrote the perfect description of what it is like to enter the cold call zone:

I discovered you never know yourself until you're tested, and that you don't even know you're being tested until afterwards, and that in fact there isn't anyone giving the test except yourself.

The cold call zone is indeed a test, weeding out those who don't have the stamina to make introductions to strangers and say good things about themselves. It's all a bit easier when the cold calls you make are to what I call "Peer + 2" contacts. (See [Networking Scenarios, Part One](#) and [Networking Scenarios, Part Two](#)). This term--"Peer+2"--should remind you that often the best cold calls are to people who are just a couple of years past you in experience. They'll be receptive to talking about how they made the transition to their job,

and there will be some empathy for your situation since they were in your shoes not that long ago. Another strong plus for Peer + 2 contacts is that they are considerably easier to reach than the Director of Research. On the other hand, you should never hesitate to contact the top people in your field. While you may not have more than a few moments with a well-published investigator, you never know when a hiring manager or recruiter will call that person seeking to fill a job. Dr. Arnold Demain, a distinguished professor for 32 years at MIT, would always take calls from recruiters and share with them the CVs of people who called to introduce themselves. Many other top people do the same.


Does Networking Have to Change Your Life?

Networking is much more than a job-seeking routine; it's a life-long career enhancement tool. But it does not have to become a life philosophy, something that you live for, as Keith Ferrazzi described in his book.

Personally, I am a quiet person, still inclined to hang around the edges of cocktail gatherings after all these years of networking. At this point of my life, I'm not likely to become a radically outgoing extrovert. But that's okay; that's not what it takes to be an excellent professional networker. Even if you never escape phase 2, you can still use networking to your advantage.

But even if you view networking as a means to an end--a job, professional advancement--instead of as an end in itself, it's important to at least appear to be sincerely interested in the people you interact with. The single most important lesson that I've learned, often repeated in *Never Eat Alone*, is not to sound greedy. The best networkers don't ask "Are there any openings?" within the first few minutes of the call, and they don't drop you flat if you don't have anything to offer them immediately. Every contact you make is more than just a potential job interview; it's a seed to a future relationship.

As Keith Ferrazzi says, "Great networkers have the implicit understanding that investing time and energy in building personal relationships with the right people will pay dividends. In fact, the top people all understand this dynamic. . . . They themselves used the power of their network of contacts and friends to arrive at their present station."



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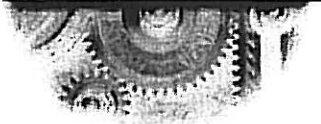
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TOOLING UP CAREER ADVICE



Peter Fiske



Advanced Networking: Six Techniques for Maintaining Professional Momentum

Peter Fiske
United States
2 June 2000

PETER IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK, ["TO BOLDLY GO: A PRACTICAL CAREER GUIDE FOR SCIENTISTS"](#)

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Those of you who have read my other Tooling Up columns will have no trouble guessing what I believe to be the Number One key to successful career development: Networking. Although your specific technical skills and general aptitude will be major factors in your success, the number and quality of job opportunities that you will find along the way will depend heavily on the depth of your network.

As both Dave Jensen and I have stressed in [past columns](#), the size and strength of your professional and personal network are critical to your success in any career-in or out of science. And although Dave and I have outlined some general advice about [Networking](#), I want to discuss some "advanced concepts" and techniques for those of you who are a bit further along.

1. Grading Your Network. Your network is made up of a range of people, including personal friends, family, and professional acquaintances. Some of these people are part of your network simply because you have preexisting relationships with them. Others you may have cultivated in a professional setting. Either way, the value of each individual in your network may vary enormously depending on the situation of the moment. It is important, then, for you to understand which individuals you should place on your A-list during a job search and why they should be there.

In general, the most valuable elements of your network are those people who hold good positions in the organization you are interested in joining, have some influence in their organization, and who are interested in helping you. For example, if you are interested in patent law and if the three members of your network who are partners in law firms specializing in intellectual property think you'd be perfect for patent law, I can guarantee you that your job search will be a breeze. These folks will steer opportunities your direction and will put in a good word on your behalf should you apply to their firm.

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In contrast, if your network is made up of people who are not in a field or an organization that interests you, they may be of little help with your job search. Sure, they may be great people--supportive and encouraging--but they will not be able to unlock any doors for you.

Thus, it is important to evaluate your network critically. Make a list of the top five to 10 people in your network who are positioned to provide the most help and then focus your attention on them. And if you find yourself with a network that lacks many "potent" members, you should begin (quickly!) to cultivate new network contacts who may be more helpful. Dave Jensen has outlined a good protocol for establishing contact with these people.

2. Nurture Your Network. The biggest challenge in maintaining your network is not meeting people but keeping contacts alive over time. You may meet a super person at a conference, but unless you follow up and maintain contact, the connection will be lost. Remember, networking is, at its heart, nothing more than a personal relationship. And all relationships require some amount of time and attention.

Keep your network contacts informed periodically about your activities and achievements. Send each one a periodic e-mail--just to let them know what you're up to. John Doerr, the Silicon Valley venture capitalist, maintains his immense network vigorously. He calls at least one person each day just to catch up.

3. Send Out Reprints. For those of you who are pursuing research careers, your past mentors, bosses, and distant colleagues will be important parts of your network. One good way of letting them know what's happening in your professional life is to send out reprints of your articles along with a quick note. One of the easiest ways of doing this is by setting up a mailing list. The small investment in time and postage will pay huge dividends.

4. Get a Business Card. Many young scientists, especially those in graduate school, seem to feel foolish about getting a business card. As one student lamented to me in a recent workshop, "But I'm not an anything yet!" It doesn't matter. Handing over a business card is a quick and convenient way of giving people your contact information; you should consider it more an act of courtesy than of arrogance. In fact, you may even want to consider having two types of cards--a business card with your work information and a "home card" with your home information. Most university bookstores sell business cards with the university seal on them. And, in case you were wondering, you DO have a right to have a business card with your university's logo on it.

5. Keep a Scheduling System. As a graduate student, you may not lead a very complex life--wake up; eat; work; eat; work; eat; work some more; sleep; repeat. But sooner or later you will have to start juggling dates, appointments, and projects. Get into a good habit early: Buy a scheduler of some kind and learn to use it effectively. In grad school I started with a daily appointment book that fit in my shirt pocket. Now I have a handheld computer that keeps track of all my addresses, calendar, memos, and e-mails; it even has games and a scientific calculator. But it doesn't really matter what medium you choose, so long as you find it easy to use and easy to carry around.

6. Answer Phone Messages and E-mails Promptly. If you're like most people, you often deal with a flood of e-mails, some of which require considerable work before responding. Similarly, you may often get phone calls that you can't immediately respond to because you're in the midst of a busy period. And then there are those e-mails or phone calls reminding you about something that's overdue! Rather than waiting until you are done to respond, consider another option: Call or e-mail back immediately, telling the person that you've received their message and that you'll be able to give a more complete response by a specified date or time (try to be realistic...). This can come as a great reassurance to these potentially important members of your network, who might otherwise be wondering if they still have the right contact information for you.

Another variation of this technique: Keep your e-mail in-box as clean as possible. Keep unanswered e-mails open until you have responded to them, at which point you can transfer them to another folder.

Conclusions

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Managing a lab and staff
Building your network

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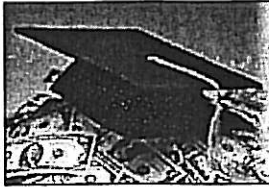
As you can see, engaging in "advanced networking" requires some extra time and diligence. At first, these networking techniques may seem tedious and time consuming. But with practice, they will become habitual, and you will find that it takes you hardly any time at all to stay in touch with your network. And if you question the wisdom of adopting these networking practices, take a look at the successful professionals around you--more often than not, you will find that they have been practicing "advanced networking" techniques for years.

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Quintessential Careers: Breaking The Myths About Career Networking

by Sherri Edwards



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Networking is often a misunderstood concept. The development of a strong network requires making connections that will sustain more than a simple introduction. Those connections, and the support required to maintain them, are the necessary ingredients to developing a network. An initial meeting or contact with someone does not establish a connection unless there is followup of some kind. The followup must suggest a genuine interest in developing a mutually supportive relationship.

Developing *relationships* (not just contacts) is key to having access to opportunities. Expecting people to be eager to listen to a "sales job" about your value is decidedly different from developing a relationship based on mutual needs/interests. Contacts may be immediate, but a relationship can be established and built only over time. Credibility and trust are much stronger cases to build a relationship on than an instantaneous commercial. The potential to build begins with the first introduction and requires the investment of time and energy for followup. The followup and continued contact is a prerequisite to developing relationships that will support your desire to be remembered. Making "contacts" with no followup or genuine interest will most likely lead to dead ends (and a large collection of worthless business cards).

Networking events may be in themselves intimidating or misleading. Calling an event a "networking opportunity" may create unnecessary pressure for the inexperienced networker. In actuality, *all* situations or events that allow interaction with others provide the potential for building a network. It is what a person *does* with the contacts they make at these events that will lead to something closer to his or her desired outcome.

It is important to prepare what you will say and to know what your objective is when you attend an event. Come prepared with questions. Identify the settings or situations that you are most comfortable with and plan your time in advance. Some people are very comfortable with an informal setting. Others prefer a structured event. The point is to participate and practice until you can move on to other, less comfortable interactions and still succeed in developing connections.

A novice networker often indicates a fear of not knowing what to say. Although there is much to-do over inventing a "30 Second Commercial," it is more likely that you will gain more by listening, than speaking. Key in on the speaker's needs. Ask questions. (The more you speak, the less you will learn.) The more you learn, the more you can 1) solve problems for someone and 2) build on your strategy for solving your own problems.

Networking vs. Selling

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A successful network connection requires a mutual understanding from the start that it is about "what I can do for you" as much as it is about "what you can do for me." Building a network requires time and a commitment to helping others. Networking is *not* just meeting as many people as you can with the intent of presenting a "30-Second Commercial" to them about what you need. Networking requires showing a concern and interest in others that will help build the credibility and trust that is the mainstay of establishing an *effective* network.

"Drive-by" networking is often perceived as "selling." This is the kind of networking that most people experience. It involves saying hello to many people and passing out business cards but does not include any followup. It is an ineffective means to establish a productive network. How many of us are turned off by telemarketers or other individuals who sell without expressing an understanding of or interest in our needs?

Most successful sales situations are relationship-based. A relationship requires *time* to build, and more importantly; it requires integrity, credibility and trust. To establish trust and credibility, the salesperson (job-seeker) needs to ask questions and listen to the answers. You need to show an interest in your audience's needs or concerns. This rapport-building cannot be accomplished in 30 seconds, nor can it be accomplished without asking some questions.

By identifying your audience's (an individual or the group's) needs, you can present intelligent solutions or responses. By asking prepared, thoughtful questions that actually produce meaningful results, or by providing helpful connections, you are more likely to impress the person you are speaking with. When an initial good impression is formed, it can be the beginning of a longer-term relationship.

A relationship must be nurtured. It grows over time. The elements of trust and credibility that you build over time are reasons for someone to remember you. Your *relationship* could potentially lead to your main interest: securing a new position. In the mean time, you have established yourself as a reliable, concerned, problem solver. Isn't that a good thing?

Networking Tips

- Ask questions and listen to the speaker.
- Identify his or her concerns or interests.
- Offer solutions or connections.
- Immediately followup with the person by email or by phone.
- Stay in touch!!!

If you have been referred to a new contact:

- Copy the referring party on any correspondence with the new contact. Keep the referrer informed of your progress.
- Make sure you have considered your new resource carefully and have prepared your questions well. If the original contact has provided you with inside information, take the time to note it and reference it.
- Ask questions that can be easily understood, using open-ended sentences, i.e., "Please describe," "please tell me about," "how would you....". Be specific in what you are asking. "Please tell me about your industry" is too vague. "Please tell me what you like most about your industry" is more specific.
- Remember to thank *anyone* that has taken time to help you by providing information of any kind. A thank you goes a long way. A thank-you card is appropriate when someone actually meets with you in person. [Editor's note: Here are some [Sample Thank-You Letters for Job-Seekers](#).]
- Stay in touch with your new contacts and let them know you are thinking of them. Send an article of interest, or even simply update them on your progress.

Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our [Job-Seeker's Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms](#).

For over a decade, Sherri Edwards has been shaping people's lives and helping organizations resolve their customer service and human resource issues through her personal coaching, consulting services, and training

classes. Her extensive background in recruiting, staffing, sales, service and training well qualifies her to help individuals make the most of their job search and to help businesses make the most of their resources and talent. Sherri has held management, sales and training positions in local, national, and international, service driven companies for 20 years, including four years in the staffing industry. She has provided outplacement and career transition services for more than eight years through one-on-one coaching and group workshops, and frequently presents motivational and educational seminars at job fairs, meetings/conferences for professional or nonprofit organizations, (including Washington State Workforce 2002 Conference), military installations, and public schools.

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