

# Job Search & Career Development: Building a Career Network



Career Services Center  
(602) 243-8154

<http://students.southmountaincc.edu/StudentDevelopment/CareerServices/>



## What is networking?!?

Networking is simply about building relationships with people. Everybody has a network, whether they realize it or not. Your network is your family, your neighbors, your classmates and teachers, the people you see at the grocery store and the mall, your teammates, your co-workers and your friends. A **career network** consists of those people who can offer you advice and information on the occupation and fields in which you are interested. **Building a career network will be an essential and effective part of your career exploration and job search.**

If you were to ask people how they obtained their current job, or how they chose a particular career, many would tell you it was because of someone they knew. People in your career network can often put you on the inside track about job openings and, perhaps most importantly, can help you decide if a career field is a good fit for your interests and skills. Learning how to build an effective network is a skill that is equally important for the first time job seeker, mid-life career changer or recent graduate.

## How do I build my career network?

**1. Write out a list of everyone you know.** If you are thinking right now, "But I'm just student. I don't know anybody that can help me in my career." Think again! You probably know more people than you think you do. Block out some time, take out a pen and paper, and write down everyone you know and each person's occupation, if you know it. Here are some ideas of people that can be on your list:

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Classmates
- Teachers
- College staff members
- Career Services staff
- Church/Synagogue/Mosque members
- Parents' friends
- Doctor/Dentist
- Staff members at your doctor's office
- Teammates
- Members of clubs you are involved in
- Grocery store employees
- Employees of stores where you regularly shop
- Co-Workers (present and former)
- Boss (present and former)
- Former classmates and teachers
- Your children's friends' parents
- Mentors
- Your Facebook or MySpace friends
- Barber/Hairstylist
- Mechanic
- Personal trainer
- Insurance agent
- People who work at your bank
- Etc!!

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- 2. Meet new people.** There are many ways to find a job. You can search the internet, but often times the most effective way to find a great job is to get out there and talk to people! Seek out networking groups, talk to faculty in career fields of interest to you, join professional organizations, create a LinkedIn account, talk to people in line at the grocery store – the possibilities are endless.

It is also important that you know how to introduce yourself when you meet new people. We call this introduction your “30-second commercial.” This is a chance for you to briefly let another person know who you are, what kind of experience or education you have, and what you are seeking. Think through this and write it out. You don't have to precisely memorize it, but writing it out can help you work through and remember the main points. Here is an example of a good 30-second commercial: *“Hi, I am Jane Doe, a sophomore at South Mountain Community College. I am majoring in Business and I will be graduating this May. I'm currently working part-time at Starbucks, and though I really enjoy it, I'm interested in learning more about retail management. I love the retail environment, and last year, while I was president of BSU, I found a passion for leadership – and I found that I was pretty good at it! So, I am currently looking for a retail opportunity where I can put my passion and skills to work, with the ultimate goal of growing into a management role.”*



This 30-second commercial covers all the bases – an introduction, an explanation of past experience and education, a highlight of skills, and a clear explanation of job goals. Plus, it is positive, and it has personality! Your 30-second commercial should not be robotic, instead, let your personality come through! That is what makes people connect and want to learn more. Also, remember to stay positive as you network. No one wants to refer someone who is negative or unprofessional.

- 3. Seek to make real connections with the people in your network.** Most people can sense when someone just wants something from them, instead of looking to build a real give-and-take relationship. So, as you build your network with people you already know and with new people, remember to interact with your network as real people, and not just as the possible doorway to a new job. It's okay to be open and honest with them about your goals and your job search, but also ask yourself how you can be of service to them. Seek to learn about their interests and goals, and if you can connect them to someone that might be able to help them – do it. And always remember to follow up and say thank you. If a friend connected you with a company for an interview, make sure you thank your friend – preferably with a thank you note – regardless of whether or not you get the job.

**Remember...**Networking is about making connections. So get out there, make some connections and be open to seeing where those connections might lead!