

Building Your Professional Community (aka How to Network)

Developing your *professional community* is connecting with people with similar interests or career goals. You want to know peers and hiring managers to exchange industry information and job leads.

Effective networking comes from listening, not talking.

- Listen to find out the other person's goals and challenges.
- Listen for areas where you could offer help.
- Listen to advice for your job search and career development.

Who makes the best networking contacts? Everyone you know! Each person might not have immediate job leads for you, but he or she could have career development advice and/or “know-someone-who-knows-someone” with a job lead.

Networking is about developing relationships, not getting stuff from people. Don't ignore potential networking contacts who don't immediately give you a job lead or valuable information.

When attending networking events (association meetings, job-search events, birthday parties, family get-togethers, etc.) have specific, realistic goals.

Samples goals:

- To meet and get contact information for five new people
- To have a conversation with someone working at XYZ Company
- To talk with current contacts to give and receive status updates

Connect with DeniseMpls

LinkedIn ~ www.linkedin.com/in/denisefelder | Twitter ~ [@DeniseMpls](https://twitter.com/DeniseMpls)

DeniseMpls Career Services ~ <http://DeniseFelder.com>

Encouraging positive life and career decisions

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Follow up and send thank-you notes. After each introduction, follow up immediately with an e-mail to confirm contact information and remind the other person of what you talked about. Use LinkedIn to request a connection with people you meet in person.

Networking is a two-way street. One person might have a lot of job leads for you, and you might share news and trends with that person by from reading trade publications. The best networking contacts are those who give as much as they receive.

Meet with, call or e-mail each of your networking contacts every 2-3 months. To keep your networking contacts from thinking you are selfish or greedy, get in touch just to say hello or to ask about their careers or personal lives.

Things you could say when checking in with your contacts:

- I found this interesting article and thought you might be interested in reading it.
- I talked with an employer and am not sure what my next step should be. Any suggestions?
- How was your vacation?
- The last time we spoke you mentioned you have a big project at work. I have a former coworker who might be able to help you with it.
- Could you critique my updated resume?

More networking info: <http://denisefelder.com/2009/06/05/learn-how-to-network/>

Contact DeniseMpls@gmail.com for help building your professional community.

Denise Felder (DeniseMpls) is a writer and career adviser encouraging individuals and challenging systems to close opportunity gaps in education and employment. Contact for individual or group coaching.