

## NETWORKING RESOURCE PACKET

### THE VALUE OF NETWORKING

It's smart to put a priority on networking because most things you need at work come from other people. Networking is important to be the best you can be – at your current job.

"Networking is really an information exchange. We utilize the relationships we build in order to get information," says Peggy Collins, who conducts a workshop titled *The Science of Networking and the Art of Connection*. "You may need to know people who'll fix a problem or buy your products. At work, you often need information from other departments. If you have a relationship with those employees, they'll be more likely to help you."

The following suggestions can help you build successful networks:

#### **Have a networking plan**

"There needs to be a purpose to networking because there's a great difference between networking and socializing. With networking, you have a mutual benefit and purpose for your connections," explains Ms. Collins.

To help formulate your networking plan, ask yourself these questions:

- ✓ What information do I need?
- ✓ Who can give it to me?
- ✓ What can I offer in return?

#### **Write a needs list**

Take out a pen and paper and make a needs list. Think of all aspects of your job. What information would make you more productive? Who could help you with a computer problem? Who could tell you where to purchase hard-to-find supplies? Who can refer you to potential customers?

#### **Determine your contribution**

For networking to succeed, there must be a two-way flow of energy. It can't be all give and no take. What do you have to offer others?

Everyone has special skills they sometimes take for granted. So on another sheet of paper, list your skills, your talents and those areas in which you have extensive knowledge or contacts. What services can you offer someone else? Can you be a link to other people who need resources? If you can't personally help someone in return, perhaps you know someone who can.

Now that you've determined your needs and what you can offer someone else, you're ready to start building your network.

#### **Join professional organizations**

Check out professional associations, but be selective. Where can you meet people with the information you need? After becoming a member, get involved in committee work, where you'll form lasting relationships.

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Giving time to your association via committee work begins the mutual benefit part of networking. As members notice you're giving, they'll be more likely to reciprocate.

## **Get to know people in other areas of your company**

Doing so can help you get assistance when you need it most.

"Making lunch dates with people you don't know very well is one way of making these connections," suggests Ms. Collins.

## **Court suppliers**

Your company's suppliers can be great information sources. Get to know them personally. Find out how you can be helpful to one another.

## **The unexpected bonus**

"The added values to creating a network are the relationships and connections we make and the meaningfulness we add to our lives," says Ms. Collins. "Since networking helps us bond with others, it enriches us while it leads us to success."

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## **WHAT ARE THE KEY POINTS TO NETWORKING?**

- ❑ Networking is the key to on-going career success.
- ❑ Networking is extending yourself to others and taking an interest in them.
- ❑ Networking is gathering information about companies and people.
- ❑ Networking is making people feel good about themselves and happy they spoke with you.
- ❑ Networking is making connections with key people in your organization.

## **MAXIMIZE YOUR NETWORKING POTENTIAL**

Use networking to enhance your career and build professional relationships. Meet with at least one new person a week, attend conventions, and meet others in your organization. Join two or more community organizations that have other business leaders on their boards. Become familiar with the leaders in your field. Help local organizations such as The United Way and the Chamber of Commerce. All of these activities will enhance your position and professional standing. Interaction with people and helpfulness to others are established characteristics of successful people.

Always write a thank-you note to each person you meet, expressing your appreciation for his or her help. Most important, offer to assist them in any way you can. This follow-up note will help reinforce your position and cement another network connection. **Remember, networking is a non-stop process.**

Source: My Professional Advice. Last Modified: 2005

## **BUILD AND USE SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

A sense of belonging is good for the body and spirit. People with strong support systems tend to be healthier, happier and better able to tolerate stress. Your friends, family members and coworkers can provide valuable feedback, help you confront difficult situations and encourage you to meet your goals.

Spouses, partners and family members are frequently primary sources of emotional support. Coworkers and members of your professional organizations often form your career support networks. Support systems come in many shapes and sizes. Here are some common ones:

### **FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

- Immediate and extended family members
- Personal friends
- Parents of children in your child's scouting or care group
- Members of your house of worship
- People who share interests in hobbies, such as bridge, music or crafts
- Exercise partners and members of athletic clubs
- Neighbors
- Fellow community volunteers
- Members of special interest groups, such as outdoor clubs, drama groups or political organizations

### **CAREER SUPPORT NETWORK**

- Co-workers
- Supervisors
- Employee Assistance Program professionals
- Mentors

### **PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS**

- Therapists
- Career advisors
- Clergy members
- Support groups

## THE GIVE AND TAKE OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Support systems are second nature for some people. Others work hard to develop them. One thing to remember is that all relationships are a matter of give and take.

### **Give your attention**

People love to have others take an interest in them. Find out what makes your friends tick. Ask questions about their goals, hobbies, families and backgrounds.

### **Take advice.**

People are flattered when you ask their advice. It makes them feel important. And it makes them more committed to you and your success.

### **Give kudos.**

It's easy to make people feel positive about themselves. All you have to do is notice what a person is doing well and comment on it.

### **Take the initiative with new friends.**

Make the first call. Invite a friend to join you for a concert. Ask a coworker to join you at a special seminar.

### **Give help when needed.**

Say "yes" to a friend's request for company or assistance when appropriate. You'll be rewarded with a feeling of giving and belonging.

Source: Parlay International, 2005

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