

NETWORKING: A "HOW-TO" - Part II

Part 2: Making The Call

by **Bob Olman**, President, COR Management Services

During your job search, the suggestion to take advantage of networking opportunities may start to sound like a broken record. This is especially true, not to mention frustrating, if you're unsure of the best way to go about it. If this sounds all too familiar, the following "recipe" is for you.

As with anything else, **preparation is the key**. Set yourself up right from the beginning, and the rest of the process will fall smoothly into place. First and foremost, remember that **the phone is your friend**. In this day and age, it's easy to forget that the phone, not email, is the most immediately effective mode of personal communication. The phone call demands responses, while the email demands, well, nothing. This is why networking, for me, is always done on the phone. So get yourself back to the 80's and love that polyester suit! It's time to get used to being on the phone again, not sending emails.

Going into the networking process, you have to prepare yourself mentally. **Attitude** is an often covered topic in self-help books, training seminars and the like. Do you know why? **BECAUSE IT WORKS!** Attitude is a key ingredient to success in this venture. Networking is a high energy, demanding, maximum output activity if you do it right; it's not a laid-back, direction-less chat with friends and others. Networking requires you to be GOAL-ORIENTED and TASK-ORIENTED for the duration. If you were a jock back in the days, approach it like you did your sport back then, with a competitive edge. Be assured, this is a battle for **your** time and energy. The spoils go to the victor: more **contacts**, more **connections**, more **activity**.

Your best bet is to set up a **block of time** and a **set of goals**: work in blocks of uninterrupted time, 2–3 hours maximum. Have a goal for that amount of time; for example, you will connect (have a phone conversation) with at least 15 new people. These goals are obviously not set in stone and different things work best for different people. For example, you may set a goal for just the amount of phone numbers you dialed. Regardless, goals work when you set rewards. Reward yourself by taking a break when you have reached your goal.

All preparation flies out the door if you don't know what you're going to say when someone is at the other end of the line. You should have a bit of a **script**, or at least a basic outline, of what you'll say, and it should include three parts:

1. **Introduction**: Give your name and a brief background first. For your background, all you really need is your title, department, or previous position. If you feel that's not descriptive enough, you can add a functional title, but remember - this should be quick. Next comes the important part—the HOOK. The hook is the reason they will continue listening. Think of this as the bold heading or catchy first sentence of an article that gets you to keep reading. This too should be fast, max 10–15 seconds. Since you have only 15 seconds to get it out, it could be as simple as "—and I am looking for a job." The point is to grab their attention.
2. **Why** you're calling: As silly as it sounds, compliments do work. Tell them you heard they were really special in their chosen field, well-liked, well-connected, whatever fits your audience. I'm sure I don't need to tell you that a well-chosen compliment will make your listener much more cooperative, helpful, and interested.
3. **Close**: Be very specific in asking for what you want. Being vague will get you

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vague results. Perhaps the close might be "—and I was wondering who you know who'd want to hear about my background and accomplishments?" or even "I was wondering who's in charge of Middle Market Senior Secured Lending at your company?"

Setting a plan for what you'll say means you control the direction of the conversation.

So now you know what to say, but who will you call? It is very important, when you sit down to network, to have all the names and numbers of people you want to contact at the ready. The idea is to **build momentum**. Call, hang-up, dial tone, call, hang-up, dial tone, and so forth. This will put you in the networking ZONE. Don't make one call, go to the yellow pages, 411, or web searching, then another call: you won't build any energy that way. In fact, as you gather new info, don't even do anything about it! Instead, set aside a later block of time for gathering the primary information to do more networking. This consists of names, companies, phone numbers, etc. Then set aside a second uninterrupted block of time to execute your plan and make the calls. I guarantee, if you work as I have outlined, you will sound **more confident, more powerful, more pleasing, and get twice the results** than if you work in an 'interrupt-driven' mode.

Speaking of interruptions, don't let little things stop you up. You should have enough pads, pens, light and desktop surface to do your work. Also, remember to work in a quiet area, not with the kids yelling and throwing a Frisbee over your head.

The last thing you should remember is to be happy and high-energy. SMILE when you are on the phone. You may not believe it, but the smile effects your tone, pitch, and the whole verbal presentation. It may sound a little strange, but STAND, don't sit, when on the phone. Get the blood flowing and present that energy to your audience!

I hope this guide clears things up and has you well on the road to effective networking. By following these tips, you are in control of your networking process. Now it's up to you to **get out there and start dialing!**

Thanks, Bob!

Bob Olman has been quoted in or contributed to Risk Magazine, Derivatives Week, Institutional Investor, Inc. Magazine, and Mortgage-Backed Securities Letter. His firm, COR Management, is a global executive search firm specializing in building teams with P&L responsibilities for hedge funds and proprietary trading groups within investment and commercial banks.

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