While being on the job search is a daunting task for most, it's important to enjoy the process. After all, having a positive attitude can make a world of difference! But how can you maintain a positive attitude during a long, frustrating job search? Good networking!

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Instead of spending all your time and energy on mainstream job boards, get off your bottom and meet new people! While I don’t recommend giving up on job boards altogether, I definitely feel networking is the best way to use your time wisely during your job search.

For example, one great analogy I love to use is the person who goes to the gym for an hour but doesn’t even break a sweat. This isn’t working out. Sure, you drove to the gym and stayed there for an hour, but did you truly leverage your abilities? Similarly, when on the job hunt, it’s important “sweat” a little – work hard and use your time
strategically to obtain your dream job.

The key to networking is to create mutually beneficial relationships by expand your professional contacts. These contacts may provide industry advice, other contacts or the key to your future job. The following steps will without doubt get you on your way to be a networking expert.

**Pre-Networking Check-List:**

- Figure out what you want to be “when you grow up” and make a list of your target organizations and key people within those organizations.
- Have a defined unique selling proposition (USP) that describes what value you would bring to the organization.
- Perfect your “elevator pitch.” Those first 60 seconds with your contact are crucial. Make sure you are prepared and make an extraordinary impression.

**Step 1: Value-Added Networking**

Give VALUE to your contacts. I cannot stress this enough. This means you must listen, listen, and listen before you ask about questions regarding your own self interests. Listening will not only present you as polite and professional (remember, be cognizant of your personal brand), but also it will allow you to find out your contacts' needs. By listening and figuring out the missing elements, you may paint a mosaic in the minds of your contacts of your transferable skills that will match their needs or the needs of someone they know.

**Step 2: Staying In Touch After Your Initial Contact**

After initially meeting, make sure your regularly stay in touch with your contacts. I recommend every four to six weeks you find a reason to e-mail them. Stay abreast of industry news (read a lot), and hopefully you took copious notes on the back of your contacts' business cards. If you don’t already this, make sure you start! Taking copious notes on everything from jargon to business will help you create a more personalized and tailored follow-up e-mail.

A great idea would be to leverage your digital technology skills in these e-mail correspondences. For example, if you find an article, podcast, or video you think might interest your contacts, make sure you send it their way. This is a great opportunity to keep yourself fresh in their minds, and again, you will be adding value to the relationship!

**Step 3: Leveraging The Relationship**

You can gain wonderful insight from your contacts, but make sure you also show an interest in them! For example, people love talking about themselves and one icebreaker is to ask how the individual got started in their career.

Also, do some thorough research on your contact’s personal and/or professional blog, Twitter feed, and LinkedIn profile so you can ask tailored questions about their career, interests and specialties. Demonstrating research with pertinent and customized questions will impress your contact because you went through such lengths to learn about him or her. This gesture will reflect well on your part, and will almost certainly persuade your contact to continue building the relationship.

**Step 4: Using Call-To-Action**

Eventually, once you have built a relationship with this contact and you feel like you have added value, it’s time for you to ask for a call to action. You may ask the person if they know of anyone from your target list of organizations to work for, or even better, if they can refer you to a key decision maker.
Ask the person if they are willing to refer you to other contacts and thus, the process continues. Repeat steps two through four with this new contact. The goal is to build as many contacts as possible to eventually land a job.

**Important Reminders:**

Here are some things all networkers need to remember:

1. **Repetition and dedication are important**

   Success does not come easily and people who are truly serious about networking and finding their dream jobs will, in the end, differentiate themselves. It’s important to repeat effective strategies and not lose hope in your job search.

2. **Stay positive!**

   Please do not get discouraged or lose confidence in yourself or your abilities. This process will be unbearable if you do not enjoy meeting new people, learning industry insights from them, and more. Trust me — your hard work will pay off, and you WILL find a job.

   Of course, this may take some time due to the economic climate, but soon the day will come when you have three different organizations calling you to come in for an interview! Remember, don’t sweat the small stuff. Networking is a process and if you are willing to put your time, energy and mind into strategies that are effective, you will see a HUGE return on your investment.

3. **Remember your manners**

   Always say “please” and “thank you.”

   Best of luck to you all!

   *This post was originally published on an earlier date.*

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