



VOICE OF EXPERIENCE


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Networking, Part II

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in Divot News, the official publication of Southern California GCSA, where the author is currently president. Part I was published in the December 2004 issue of On Course.

Here are some points to consider:

- Don't wait until you've lost your job to start networking.
- If you are clueless in the field of networking, then get a mentor.
- Be prepared and consider every day an opportunity to meet and connect with new people.
- Don't get caught without them . . . business cards, that is.
- Don't use a silly-sounding e-mail name like "MachoMan" or "Time-ForHemp" as it will gain attention but not in a positive manner.
- Don't be arrogant, and listen as much as you talk.
- Don't monopolize someone's time. Five minutes is a good limit at an initial introduction and there is a difference between following up and becoming a pen pal.
- Dress to impress and look as good or better than everyone else in the room or at the meeting. Without saying a word, you are sending a message by your attire when meeting someone.
- Don't be shy. It may not be easy for some but, with practice, you will learn how to be assertive and make yourself known to others.
- Always be truthful and never embellish your qualifications. Overstating yourself will end up giving you a tag of being dishonest.
- Serious relationships develop over time. They endure because you work at it. Most people have little use for a person that uses you for what he/she wants and then drops you like a hot potato.
- Remember to repay the favor of those that have helped you. Take time to help the newcomers and youth of the industry. Extend your hand to them and be sincere.

In closing, it is easy to see why networking is so complex. There is a lot to be considered. Nobody grows up with a networking gene in his or her DNA. It is a learned skill. By following some of the tips I have provided, you too can "get connected." While I have never thought of making new contacts as merely a lead for a job search, I can tell you that it has been the most enjoyable part of my career. I am one of those individuals that truly feels that the most important thing to me, over the last 35 years, is not what I have accomplished but the people that I have met along the way! 

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