

Finding Job Leads in Unusual Places

By Tracy A. Bumpus, CPRW, JCTC

A recent article in a recruiting newsletter promoted finding job candidates in the aisles of Barnes and Noble Booksellers on the premise that “you are what you read.” Taken from a job seeker point of view, this approach to recruiting demonstrates that job seekers should be ready at any and all times to make positive contacts that might lead to a new career position. Such an attitude often goes by that dreaded “n” word—networking!

A collective groan often erupts at the mention of networking to find a job. After 3 solid years in the late nineties of simply being able to type “Joe Jobseeker – Java Programmer-555-5555” into a résumé database and the phone rings off the hook, getting used to WORKING at getting a job can be tough. At the mention of the word “networking”, most people get a mental image of mixers from college where everyone was dressed uncomfortably, carried around a watery drink for two hours, and struggled to read nametags that were printed too small. “Working a room” is just too darn much work, even if it means the difference between paying the mortgage next month or moving into a single-wide behind the mother-in-law’s house. Such a strained form of networking is just too tense to be endured without solid promise of a job at the end of the evening.

Fortunately, networking doesn’t have to be a nail-biter event. Networking as defined by Dictionary.com is “An extended group of people with similar interests or concerns who interact and remain in informal contact for mutual assistance or support.” The key words in that definition are “informal” and “mutual”. Networking is not going to everyone you know with your hat in your hands begging for a job! It’s simply talking to people! It’s getting out in the community and getting involved! It’s helping others by connecting them with people you know that can help them.

I write résumés for a living. As part of my client consultation, I ask clients in what civic, professional, or volunteer affiliations they are involved. 95% of clients are not involved in anything. They work, they come home. On the weekends, they mow the grass and wave at the neighbors. True, the work schedule of a technical professional (my market niche) generally does not leave a great deal of extra time for extras. But you know what I’ve discovered about that other 5% of my clients who ARE involved in something? They enjoy a more accelerated career track than other clients in terms of salary, position, and growth of responsibility. I’m not saying that if you want to get promoted you have to go join 8-10 organizations. What I’m saying is something that all job seekers have discovered in the past 18 months: It’s not what you know these days so much as it is who you know. And if you don’t know very many people, it’s a lot tougher to find a job.

Some suggestions for getting involved and building a network:

- Join a Users’ Group or Special Interest Group
- Volunteer to beta test a product
- Volunteer at your church
- Join a professional organization that is 1) active, and 2) has regular monthly meetings
- Host a neighborhood weenie roast and get to know everyone
- Show up at your kids’ ball games and talk to other parents
- Send congratulation cards to people you know who have received a new job or promotion
- Do volunteer tech work for schools, churches and other nonprofit organizations
- Attend school board meetings and talk with others who also attend
- Attend city council meetings and talk with others who also attend
- Volunteer on a political campaign
- Enroll in a class

- Join a public speaking group

All of these are simple ways to get out of your cubicle and start getting to know people. None of them are real nail biters (well, maybe the last one could be a little tense). They are all very simple to do and many would actually improve your personal life in addition to helping your professional goals.

The HR Panel members at the 2002 conference of the Professional Association of Résumé Writers and Career Coaches (PARW/CC) were unanimous in their practice of paying particular attention to résumés which came to them through a referral. Debbie Zurinski, Regional Vice President of Snelling Personnel Services in Dallas, Texas stated "Networking is the number one way to get your résumé in front of me. I give top priority to résumés that have made it to my desk by means of a referral." Résumés received via online job boards or non-targeted mailings were given the least consideration. Maximize your job search effectiveness by extending your network. It's time well spent and you might make some new friends in the process!

####

Copyright, 2002. RezAMAZE.com. Austin, Texas.

Tracy Bumpus, CPRW, JCTC is Executive Director of RezAMAZE.com, a career services firm that specializes in working with professionals in the high tech and engineering industries. Mrs. Bumpus can be contacted through her web site at <http://www.rezamaze.com> or via email at tbumpus@rezamaze.com.