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Networking is a contact sport!

Job search does not happen in a digital vacuum.

You have learned in earlier sessions that the key to the whole notion of productive and efficient networking is to generate INTERACTIVE communication, the initial basis of relationship building! When involved with active job search, part of our preparation is to develop our set of Personal Marketing collateral materials.

I have long suggested that steps one and two of our 12-step Process M.A.P. give us all the ingredients we need to “get in the galley” and cook up a three course meal of our personal marketing collateral materials.

While most job seekers seem to prefer starting with a resume, so that they can begin simply applying to any job that seems remotely close to what they can do... I encourage you to work with all your ingredients at the same time...if your desired result is a nice prime rib dinner, don't start with the meat—start with the seasonings and vegetables, even get your dessert started...

Because that “meaty” resume is the easiest and quickest of what you need to prepare! So...job seeking ‘chefs,’ let's look at the ingredients that you have identified through assessment of your galley shelves, and your dinner of choice. Your personal marketing collaterals might be grouped into three categories:

VERBAL COLLATERALS...

1. A well rehearsed “two minute commercial,” your answer to the most asked question during career transition, “Tell me about yourself.”
2. Several, well thought out, “elevator speeches,” examples that support your primary, positioning, key words. These are usually your representative accomplishments under the SUMMARY of your resume. (30 seconds to 1 minute)
3. A succinct “qualification statement” that you can use as an introduction at networking events. (usually 20 – 30 seconds)

4. An "exit statement" which explains your availability, to address the second most asked question during career transition.

Be working on both your written and verbal collaterals at the same time. One will help you "edit" and practice the other. Having your collaterals prepared and rehearsed prior to active personal marketing is central to your success and builds confidence. Consistency in the delivery of your message is what creates memory... and frequency of your message helps you get there.

WRITTEN COLLATERALS...

1. A GREAT Resume that positions you clearly as a terrific FIT with your career objectives... and in today's technologies, a database-friendly, ascii version;

2. A correspondence template package that consistently carries your communication strategy, your message... and in today's technologies, a reformatted, text only version of your resume ready for email needs;

3. A high impact, personal biography and/or NETWORKING PROFILE that you can lead with in your referral based networking strategies.

4. And, after you have coached your REFERENCES, a complete and clearly positioned LinkedIn Profile, written to reflect your communication strategy and in synch with your other collaterals.

NON-VERBAL COLLATERALS...

1. Personal appearance, dress and grooming;

2. Positive attitude and bearing, a sense of purpose and worth;

3. Presence + Preparation = Confidence

4. Be prepared for phone calls and interviews: Research

5. Confidence feeds on itself and provides a pathway to success!

6. Practice the "learnable skills" consistently PRACTICE TO GAIN CONFIDENCE IN PHONE CALLS... and remember, there are only TWO reasons to be on the phone during active job search networking:

- To gather information, advice, referral names and opportunities.
- Second, to secure actual interviews.

WHERE To Start

As a contact sport, networking is about interaction between sender and receiver, buyer and seller... job seeker and potential employers. The great news is that you get to start from YOUR 'sweet spot' or middle ground where all this interaction occurs the easiest!

You start with people that you already know or have some connection to. If your 'natural network' doesn't have a regular meeting—most do not, by their very diverse nature—groups of like-minded people are easy to identify and attend. As you begin to reach out and broaden your 'sweet spot,' be selective in your attempt to create a supportive 'community' grouping close to your targeted marketplace.

Networking within your targeted marketplace, your unique, job search 'community' should play a critical role in your Personal Marketing strategies. It is an easy means to getting the word out about your business to people who may purchase and influence others to purchase your service or goods. But just as with any other job search activity, we get what we put into it.

That being said, local networking events are seeing record turnouts lately, a sign that leads us to believe the networking is paying off. A Local Networking Group is any organization, which meets on a regular basis, to share and receive referrals and leads. Examples of formal Local Networking groups for small and medium sized business include: BNI (Business Networking International), Merchants' Associations, Chambers of Commerce, and Business Associations.

Some of the largest local organizations devoted to supporting job seeker efforts are Frisco Connect, Cathedral of Hope, the Southlake Group, Watermark Church... to name just a few. Many are associated with church support organizations... but are completely nondenominational in their approach, operation and outreach.

WHAT to start with if you have a huge personal contact network to start with... great! Start by prioritizing your list into three sub categories... Seasoned networkers with terrific phone and interview skills will undoubtedly start their networking efforts at the "B" and "SEE" list levels... but for the 'normal' job seeker this represents pre-mature activity.

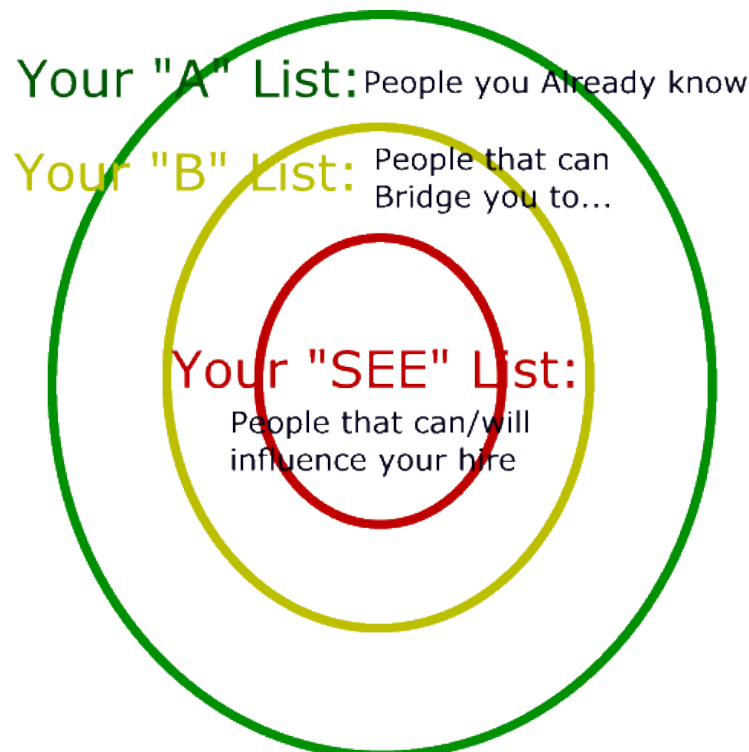
Use the earlier preparation steps, practice time, and your first several 'baby steps' to develop your effectiveness BEFORE having to perform for your best contacts. "Don't shoot yourself in the foot." Further, try to avoid the temptation to respond to your sense of urgency in securing your next employment, with lack of adequate preparation and planning— the first seven steps—don't be guilty of... "Ready... FIRE... Aim" It is as easy as a-b-c...

YOUR DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Steps six and seven of our 12-step Process M.A.P., initial research and pulling together your initial contact list are in place to create focus to your efforts... What are the trends in the market that are attractive to you, and which target organizations are most needy of your value proposition?

Your evolving contact list will take you through the A-B-C's of networking and the development of your distribution channels...

- A. Start with people you already know or have reason to "should know," as they are the most likely to be receptive to your initial efforts.
- B. As you develop your network, identify key bridge contacts that can give you specific information or introduce you to key decision-makers and hiring authorities.
- C. Critical to your success is building relationships with people who can influence your hiring. This 'must see' list of influential contacts and hiring authorities is the epicenter of your job search campaign!



Develop your networking prowess with your "A" List contacts, people you already know, have cause to know, or have known in the past... connect or reconnect with this less-threatening 'audience.'

Then, exercise and practice your newfound skills within the job search support, local networking groups...beginning to reach toward a bigger "B" list, those people that you are referred to that can bridge your efforts to the people who can influence your hire. Begin to fold-in professional associations and trade groups as a way to strengthen and accelerate the development of your "B" list.

"See" list contacts WILL happen!

BABY STEPS Revisited Be your own best coach... pay homage to the demon in the room, TECHNOLOGY, specifically social media... and your own communication preferences. Even the most passive communicators must learn to engage and interact... but with whom?

Use your FREE LinkedIn account to organize your contact list and to function like a road map of who to network to next. Once identified, get on the phone and meet your newest "A" list contact.

You'll never know when a 'hidden gem' of a "B" or "See" list contact will materialize in the process. When you're networking, ask for a reference, not a job. Whether you're doing catch-up drinks or grabbing lunch to reconnect, your main goal is to get an ally, not a tally of job listings.

Recruiting a helping hand to your search is your aim.

So don't ask your college buddy if he knows of any jobs for people like you. How would he know? And don't ask your boss from two jobs ago if she has the names of any people who are currently looking to hire somebody like you. It puts her on the spot. No, instead, ask for information, advice, or a reference.

Mention that you're going to be moving on, or you're already looking, or that you're actively "out there looking." Let them know the type of positions that are a good *CareerFIT* for you, and what you're hoping to achieve in your next opportunity. And, if appropriate, ask them if — when it gets to the actual interviewing process — it would be OK to use them as a reference.

By letting them know that you hold them in high enough esteem to potentially use them as a reference, you're actually paying them a compliment. By not putting them on the spot about specific job openings, you eliminate making them consider you as a Yes-NO-Maybe "applicant," thus reducing the awkwardness inherent in the networking conversation.

You're also making it easier for them to say "yes", or convey useful information... or simply to feel good about themselves for being a good friend and helping you out with this little favor. All of which means that you have a new buddy in your search — one who's going to be thinking about keeping an eye out for new opportunities and an ear open for fresh possibilities for their reference-able friend: you.

Now, this doesn't work for just any old person you meet on the street. There's probably a pretty good match between people you'd take to lunch and those you could ask to be a reference. So my advice would be to stick to asking those you know well enough.

Being realistic, the widely offered and deeply wrong advice from past decades of job search tricks and tips... that you should try to extract favors, concessions, names, jobs, and career assistance from people you've only met over the phone is not only useless, it can be counterproductive to your aims by antagonizing your broader network.

Reserve actual "information networking" for its more productive uses. By making your networking about positive interactive conversation and compliments, you'll find it pays dividends.

A network is not something you establish overnight. It requires work and time, but the rewards are incalculable. If you are in a job search mode and do not have a good network already in place, there are several ways you can begin to build one. In the 'challenging waters of career transition,' your network development should be happening in waves...

The WAVES of PMP Implementation

The concept, here, is to keep a pulse of activity going consistently and regularly into the job market. When you let up, if you take time away from the marketplace, they will tend to forget you...the job market has no memory. It's up to you to achieve top-of-mind awareness.

Get the Most From Your 'first wave' of Networking... Your purpose in this 'first wave' of networking is to gain information, advice, and most importantly names of other individuals you can call. The lifeline of networking is to always get more names. Be sure to ask each person if they have a minute to talk to you, and when finished talking thank them for their time.

Make networking calls in a block of time. Each call is more comfortable than the one before. Do not call people and ask them if they have any openings at their company... This is almost always totally non-productive. THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH ARE ALWAYS THE SAME: the search process itself is time consuming work, and the more productive time you spend on your job search the more interviews and job offers you will generate.

So the question at this point is "Where do you find out about job openings and on which avenues of job search should you spend the most time?"

THE BEST (And Worst) OF BOTH WORLDS

Technology has done a terrific job of consolidating posted job leads. Web crawling software can reach out and consolidate classified ads, recruitment posts and company posted job opportunities. We know these consolidated sites as Internet Job Banks... and some of them contain a huge amount of postings.

Unfortunately, their very size makes it challenging to stay current and eliminate redundancy. Also unfortunate is the fact that these very same job banks have consolidated your competition and rejection from Corporate America. This is not even mentioning that Corporate America is also missing it's goal of better qualified resumes to fuel its recruitment effort... they're simply getting MORE resumes to process!

Solution? Use the Job Banks to generate your most attractive leads, then network your way into those targeted organizations.

JOB SEARCH IMPLEMENTATION...

Initiating an effective work-seeking campaign during ANY economic condition presents a terrific opportunity to embrace the concepts of Personal Marketing in The OTHER Job Market... with the focus on job search issues and the creation of a personalized knowledge base and an effective network for the rest of your career. In the 'first wave' you will increase the REACH of your efforts and begin to reestablish old relationships, develop new ones, and identify opportunities.

Each opportunity is its own 'tipping point,' where you initiate your 'second, more focused, wave' which is directed at targeted organizations. This is one of those measurable, predictable ratios... the more regular you are with your 'first wave' contacts and follow-through, the more likely targeted organization contacts will begin to generate INTERVIEWS.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

A good accountability partner can make a major difference in one's job search. I have seen many job seekers flounder because they launch their search efforts before they are totally prepared for the unique adventure ahead. The power of partnering comes in to play when two well-prepared job seekers come together to hold each other accountable for the activities and time management involved in productive search efforts.

We may fall victim to distractions from the job search. The trap of sleeping late, watching TV, and playing on the Web can ensnare us. With no one but ourselves to hold us accountable for our job-search goals and plans, time can just slip away. It's so easy to lose balance between personal needs and wants and our job search. The other end of the spectrum is becoming a "job search-aholic."

For many of us, our identity is tied up tightly in our career, while others need a job right away just to make ends meet. No matter how great the need or desire for a new position, conducting a job search 24/7 non-stop can actually be a detriment to your success. Once burnout sets in and enthusiasm begins to wane, how can you be at your best when you interview or even network?

The buddy system of accountability is an ideal way to protect against burnout while keeping on track!



ABOUT DFWCareerpilot... A FREE, WEEKLY WORKSHOP event with a regular rotation of topical material covering a 12-Step Process **M.A.P. (MAHER Associates Process)** that will accelerate your job search success. Bob's presentation style is highly engaging and interactive, so never be shy with questions and/or supportive anecdotes.

BE PREPARED for Bob's two philosophies: Learn to Embrace The OTHER Job Market... and, fully optimize your efforts with a high tech/high touch approach!

1. His public Group on LinkedIn: **DFWCareerpilot**
2. **GO TO: www.dfwcareerpilot.com** and **FOLLOW** (register for) it to receive regular updates
3. Follow **DFWCareerpilot** on Twitter!



Bob Maher created his online presence, www.careerpilot.com, in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.

On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. The Institute of Career Certification-International has him reviewing the portfolios of incoming applicants. Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.