Job Hunt: 50 Networking Tips

by Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon
authors of *Make Your Contacts Count, 2nd Ed.*, American Management Association

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by Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon

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Welcome to Job Hunt: 50 Networking Tips

More than 2/3 of white-collar jobs are found through networking. So, if you are looking for a job, you’d better get good at making your contacts count.

The stronger your network, the shorter your job search.

These 50 tips are based on our book, Make Your Contacts Count: Networking Know-How for Business and Career Success (American Management Association, 2007). Most tips include the page number in the book where you can find out more about how to become the natural and only choice by your next employer.

Co-authors Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon are co-founders of Contacts Count. We deliver keynotes and training programs for corporations, associations, government agencies, and universities.

Visit www.ContactsCount.com to sign up for our free e-newsletter. It’s chockfull of examples, tips, and tools.

About the Authors

Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon co-founded Contacts Count in 1990 as the premier nationwide consulting and training firm that specializes in teaching networking as a professional and leadership competency. They are co-authors of 5 books. The latest is Make Your Contacts Count (AMACOM, 2nd edition).

In person and in print, they help corporate, government, association, and university clients put the tools of networking to work in the service of business and career goals. Recent clients include Deloitte, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Kraft, Corning, the National Geographic Society, Georgetown University, and the National Association of Home Builders. Clients rave about their practical, creative, and upbeat keynotes, workshops, and training programs.
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by Anne Baber and Lynne Waymon

1. Tell Your Talent, Not Your Title
When someone asks, “What do you do?” don’t say, “I’m an Internal Client Services Technician – IT.” Say, “I help employees get the most out of their office technology.”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 99)

2. Use a Vivid Example to Explain Your Job
When someone asks, “What do you do?” provide a “picture” of you wearing just ONE of your “hats.” Say, “I take a box of donuts and go to various departments to provide tips – and answer questions – on using the new XYZ Office software.”
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

3. Have Something To Give Contacts
Everyday, think of 3 things you can give people you’ll be talking with:
   • A report from a consulting firm on future trends in Human Resources.
   • A great website for Chief Financial Officers.
   • An article on using social networking in recruiting.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

4. Get Ready for a Networking Event
   • Ask the organizer for a list of attendees. Look for people you’d like to meet or re-connect with.
   • On the website, notice the news – who’s received an award, hot trends, up-coming programs.
   • Plan to answer the question, “What’s new with you?” with an anecdote about a recent experience.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 206)
5. Benefit from Your Professional Association
Serve on a committee to increase your visibility and get to know people better. Take responsibilities seriously. Remember The All or Nothing Rule: If you do one thing well, people will think you do everything well. That means, doing a great job as newsletter editor convinces people that you’re a great accounting manager.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 56)

6. Minimize the Risk of Helping You
Asking for a referral or connection, is asking for your contact to
• Go out on a limb for you.
• Put his/her good name on the line.
• Stick his/her neck out for you.
Before you ask for help, give your contact examples of you solving the problem, saving the day, serving the client.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 36)

7. Teach People To Trust You
When a contact becomes sure of your character and your competence, you’ve established that you’re trustworthy.
• Keeping commitments and meeting deadlines shows character.
• Staying at the leading edge of your profession and handling “the little stuff” with care shows competence.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 34)

8. What Is Networking Anyhow?
It’s not about talking and taking. It’s about teaching and giving. It’s the deliberate process of exchanging information, resources, support, and access to create mutually beneficial relationships for personal, professional, and organizational success. It’s teaching what you’re good at and interested in and learning what your contact is good at and interested in, so you can give and get opportunities.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 17)

9. Who Is a Valuable Contact?
As you talk with a contact, ask, “How would you describe what I do?” the person who can give a vivid, accurate example of what you’re good at, is a valuable contact and more likely to pass opportunities along to you. So, continue to update contacts with stories about your recent successes and accomplishments.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 43)
10. Reach Back To People You’ve Lost Touch With
Don’t let relationships dry up. Call someone you haven’t seen for quite a while and say, “Isn’t it time for our annual lunch?” Invite a colleague to attend a professional meeting or volunteer for a good cause with you. Staying in touch takes creativity. Another good excuse for re-connecting might be to suggest a contact for a plum assignment. And re-connecting is a good way to compliment someone. “I remembered that you are a top-notch presenter and I noticed that the professional association just put out a call for speakers.”
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

11. Find Key Contacts
Seek out the “go-to people,” the experts, the influencers, people who will give back when you give and will respond quickly to your requests. To find these key people, ask
- “Who’s always got the answers?”
- “Who always has good ideas?”
- “Who is someone who knows everybody?”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 171)

12. After Someone Provides Information. . .
Get back in touch to tell the rest of the story:
- How you used the information.
- What happened.
- How valuable the assistance was.
- How your contact can count on you when he/she needs something.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 172)

13. When You Are Asking for Something, Be Prepared
Do your homework. Research your question or problem thoroughly. Form your question(s) carefully. Make your quest interesting and intriguing for your contact. Look for what’s in it for him/her to help you. Can’t find any payoff? Ask, “What can I help you with?”
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

14. Is Saying “Thanks” Enough?
Size your “Thank you” to match the size of the favor.
- Send a handwritten note.
- Take your contact to lunch.
- Send a funny card.
- Write a note to your contact’s boss.
- Take every opportunity to give credit publicly.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 172)

15. Manage Your Career
Network to increase your visibility within your organization, so that opportunities find you. Explore options in case your job goes away. Ask yourself, “What skills do I have that could be used in other areas of the organization.” Figure out how to showcase those skills. What can you do so that others become aware of your capabilities?
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 164)

16. Put Networking on Your Calendar
It’s easy to let networking fall to the bottom of your “to-do” list, if you don’t carve out time in your schedule. Designate specific times on your calendar for networking. Wednesday lunches? Friday afternoons between 4 and 5 p.m.? After-work volunteer activities? Interdepartmental brown bag lunches? Highlight these times in yellow. Scanning the yellow splotches will help you decide if you are spending enough time on this key professional activity.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 158)

17. Make “Stay-in-Touch” Calls
- Say something to verify you know your contact’s interests: “When I was having dinner at a Korean restaurant, I remembered your stories about trying all the delicacies when you lived in Seoul.”
- Give something: “You mentioned that your job was requiring more negotiating skills. There’s a speaker on that at my professional association meeting next month. Would you like to be my guest?”
- Teach something: “My job has taken an interesting turn: I’m not only writing speeches for the executives, I’m also coaching them on presentation skills – something that requires a lot of tact!”
- Listen for what else you can give: “Let me e-mail you an article on trends in HR that I just ran across.”
- Set a meeting: “Let’s have lunch next month, so we can stay in touch.”
18. Use Outcomes To Define Your Role
Focus on the outcome, not the process. One human resources specialist used to say, “I help departments set up flex-time programs.” When she noticed that managers didn’t realize the impact of flex-time on retention, she began saying, “I help retain employees, by setting up flex-time arrangements.”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 182)

19. Know Your Networking Arenas
Where do you network? Become conscious of building mutually beneficial relationships wherever you go. For a diverse, rich network, recognize the opportunities in these arenas:
  • Your workplace, former co-workers
  • Professional associations, trade groups
  • Alumni association
  • Hobby, sports, or leisure time groups
  • Kid connections
  • Civic and service organizations
  • Religious organization, volunteer groups
  • Friends and family
  • Neighborhood
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 199)

20. Network To Find Answers
You’ve got questions, challenges, dilemmas, or new projects. Ask yourself, “Who in my network might have faced something similar? Who can I tap for breakthrough ideas? Who might know the right person to give me some help with this?” Then, e-mail your contact, giving a brief outline of your question and asking for a phone conversation. That way, your contact has time to gather his/her thoughts or remember the best person for you to talk to.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

21. Stand Out With Stories
The #1 relationship-building skill may well be storytelling. Want your expertise to stick in the minds of your contacts, so they can connect you
with the right opportunities? You might be reluctant to say, “I’m a wonderful mentor.” But you can tell about the time you helped Bob decide to enroll in the Executive Fellows Program. Stories stick. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 129)

22. Teach Contacts About You With Stories
Stories:
- Create a vivid, colorful, unforgettable picture in your contact’s mind.
- Give your contact something to say about you when he’s recommending you to someone else.
- Are repeated more accurately by contacts than dry facts.
- Showcase your character and competence.
- Let your contacts “see you in action.”
- Make you an enjoyable conversation partner.
(Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 130)

23. Value Acquaintances
Acquaintances are friends of friends or contacts of contacts. They act as bridges to new groups. They’re especially valuable when you are job hunting, seeking to diversify your network, or just wanting to get out of a networking rut. Bonus: because you’ve already established trust with your contact, he/she can vouch for you with the acquaintance. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 40)

24. Cultivate Associates
The other members of groups you belong to are associates. Groups of all kinds offer you access to their members. But you don’t have valuable networking relationships with them until you begin to exchange information and learn about each other. To create mutually beneficial relationships takes 6 to 8 meetings – something that’s easier to accomplish in groups where you’ll see each other repeatedly at events. (Want more? Listen: *Networking Know-How*, 80-minute audio workshop.)

25. Know the 6 Kinds of Networking Relationships
Don’t make the mistake of thinking you either have a relationship – or you don’t. Relationships range from one-time encounters (accidents) to people you meet through contacts (acquaintances) to other members of groups you belong to (associates) to people you exchange information and resources with (actors) to people who provide access and

opportunities (advocates) to people on your own personal “board of directors” (allies) who try to help you succeed in every way possible. Understanding the nature of your relationship with a contact helps you figure out the next step to take to make that relationship more valuable. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 40)

26. The Stronger Your Network, the Shorter Your Job Search
Nearly 2/3 of white-collar jobs are found through networking. That means, it’s not smart to spend most of your time job-hunting on-line. Instead, reach out to fellow alumni, professional association co-members, former co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family. Attend networking events and be ready to talk with people about your expertise. (Want more? Listen: *Networking Know-How*, 80-minute audio workshop.)

27. Avoid the Ho-Hum Conversation
It’s the standard, ritualized, one-size-fits-all chit-chat: “Hi, how are you?” “Not bad. How are you? “Not bad. What’s new?” “Not much. What’s new with you?” “Not much. Been real busy.” “Me too.” The problem: You haven’t learned anything about the other person or taught the person anything about you. You have nothing to follow up on. The solution: Have an answer to “What’s new?” And have a specific question to ask like, “What’s your #1 priority at work this year?” (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 107)

28. Let People Hear Of You Before They Hear From You
Jumpstart your networking by raising your visibility. Chair a committee, volunteer, present a program, speak up, give a door prize, or write an article. Every time you’re visible, you teach people about your expertise and your character. By the time they meet you, they already know you are trustworthy. Your reputation has preceded you. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 38)

29. Don’t Let Shyness Hold You Back
Nearly 60% of American’s say they’re shy – at least in some situations. So relax: A majority of the people you meet also are feeling uncomfortable. You don’t have to be an extrovert. Anyone can learn the skills and strategies for connecting and feel competent and comfortable at networking, while helping others feel less anxious. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 22)
30. Turn Your Critic Into Your Coach
If you tell yourself you’re just no good at networking, your mind believes you. Instead, when negative thoughts creep into your mind, counter them with strong, positive statements like, “I’m prepared to talk about several interesting topics,” or “I’m eager to tell people about my new project,” or “I’ve thought of several questions that will help start conversations.”
Notice that you do need to “Be prepared to be spontaneous.”
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

31. Assess Networking Organizations
At least once a year, review the groups you belong to in light of your current goals. Write down the name of the group, your reason for joining, your role, and the benefits you’ve gotten.
De-activate your membership if you
  • Belong, but don’t attend events.
  • Aren’t benefiting in tangible ways from your involvement.
  • See that the reason you joined is no longer a high priority.
Take a more active role if you
  • Decide you could get more out of your membership.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 54)

32. Find Stories To Show Your Expertise
Decide what you want to teach people about your expertise.
“I pay attention to details,” or “I go the extra mile for clients,” for instance.
Then think of an example.
“The time I got the entire office moved over the weekend and had everything ready to go on Monday morning” or “How I found a co-sponsor for an ad campaign that was too expensive for my client.”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 134)

33. Organize Your Time at an Event
At a one-hour reception, how many people should you be able to meet or re-connect with? If you spend about 10 minutes with each person, you can converse with about 6 people, one-on-one, or 12 people if you’re in some threesomes. The goal is not quantity, but rather quality. Think ahead of time what you’d like to talk about, and what topics people in this setting will be interested in. And of course, have some good questions on
the tip of your tongue, so you leave with new information about each person’s interests and challenges. (Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

34. Speed Up Your Job Hunt
The stronger your network, the shorter your job hunt. How many people believe in your character and competence and know exactly the kind of opportunity you’re looking for? Networking is about teaching people what you’re good at, what to come to you for, what kinds of opportunities to send your way. Most people won’t be there when you have your shining moments, so it’s only through conversation that they learn how to help you. So start teaching!
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 233)

35. Cultivate a Job Hunter’s Mindset
Notice any negative beliefs and assumptions you hold about networking to find a job. Instead, cultivate these thoughts as you conduct your search:
- People will be glad to help me – especially since I’ve gone out of my way to be generous to others).
- I know that the right job for me is out there – I look forward to connecting with people who can help me find it.
- I’m comfortable walking into a room full of strangers, because although I don’t have a title right now, I do have lots of talents.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 234)

36. Fill Up Your Job Hunting Calendar
Opportunities to connect with people who can hire you abound! Find the professional association that serves your job type. Check the Encyclopedia of Associations for ideas or ask more experienced people in your field what group(s) they attend or recommend. In the informal atmosphere of events and committee meetings, you’ll have a chance to show your character and competence and ask questions that will uncover leads.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 237)

37. Create Your Job Hunter’s Business Card
Why not have several to reflect 2 or 3 possible ideal jobs? Include all your identifiers, any special career designations and certifications that you hold, and words or phrases to remind people of your skills. Roberta
uses “Talent Manager” and “Diversity Expert in the Multi-Generational Workforce.” She includes a private web site where she’s posted her resume and a unique cell phone number she got to receive all job-search calls.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

38. Expand You Job Hunting Arenas
You never know where your best job lead will come from. Your mother-in-law? Your old friend from college? The guy who coaches your daughter’s team? Or someone you met at the trade association? The best networkers are known in about 6 different arenas. Cultivate diverse arenas to dive into the widest possible pool of leads.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 237)

39. Come Up With Your Job Hunter’s Answer to “What Do You Do?”
You may not have a title, but you sure do have talents. So design your answer to teach a talent or skill, and then tell about a time you saved the day, solved the problem, or served the client. Marsha was laid off 3 months ago and knows that once she builds some trust with her new contact, she’ll tell her that, but first she answers the question with, “I manage complex projects. One of my favorites was leading a group of 12 transportation engineers and two architects who completed an $800,000 bridge-building project in record time.”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 239)

40. Plan Job Hunting Process
Narrow down the universe of potential employers by choosing 20 organizations you’d like to work for. Set up a folder for each company and begin gathering “business intelligence” on each one from the internet, the newspaper, and especially from people in your network. Ask questions such as, “Do you know anyone who works at xyz?” Look down the registrant list for events you go to and plan to connect with people from your list of 20. Check out your alumni association for contacts in the 20. By the time you get to the interview stage, you’ll know so much about the company’s history, challenges, and needs, that you’ll look like an insider.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)
41. Get Information Interviews
If you’d like to talk with someone who works in a field you want to enter or is employed by an organization you’d like to join, recognize that most people are too busy to give you a formal interview. Instead, talk with people at a convention, or in your carpool, or at a party. Be ready with good questions such as, “How did you get into your line of work?” “What trends do you see emerging?” “What’s your best advice for a career transitioner like me?”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 238)

42. Give Generously
Here’s what to do, first, last, and always to build your network: listen generously. Listening with a bias toward action has hidden benefit. By taking the attention off yourself, you’ll be less nervous and your personality will shine through. Give first and give freely. Help others find the resources and people they need to get the job done. It’s fun and will definitely make you memorable.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 240)

43. Say Thanks
The giving goes on when you thank the people in your life. Don’t be too shy or too proud to appreciate the people who’ve given you information, support, or advice. Gratitude fully expressed reminds people that you are connected. And it’s also a great time to encourage people to ask you for help, which reinforces the mutual benefit – and the gratitude.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

44. Don’t Cross the Line in Asking For Advice
Don’t ask for free professional advice when you should be paying for it. Don’t ask the Career Coach to review your resume. Don’t ask the lawyer for advice about a legal issue. Hire them instead. On the other hand, a great way to engage contacts is to pose questions like this: “As somebody who’s had me lead a retreat for your division in the past, how do you think we ought to be describing our services to others in the organization?” Or “What do you suppose our customers are most worried about in this economy?”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 80)
45. Don’t Whine
So you’ve had a rough day. Or a rough week. Or a rough year. Keep it to yourself except when talking privately with your most trusted confidantes. With others, put on a happy face. Prepare ahead of time a few upbeat topics you can talk about at lunch, at the task force meeting, or at the convention.
If someone loads you down with “Ain’t it awfuls,” try saying, “Tell me something good that’s happening.”
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 82)

46. Avoid Hard-Sell Networking
“Hi, I’m Sheila. I sell advertising specialties. I could turn your business card into a refrigerator magnet and have it back to you in less than 5 days.” Ouch! Too much! Too soon! Networking events are a time to get to know people, build trust, and listen generously, so you can show your character and competence. Networking events are not appropriate for making the sale, closing the deal, getting the job, or landing the contract.
(Want more? See Make Your Contacts Count, pg. 82)

47. Learn To Love Networking, Even If You’re an Introvert
Here’s how:
1. Be prepared . . . to be spontaneous! Have a few topics on the tip of your tongue. What information and resources are you looking for? What would you like to “research” by talking with the people who’ve gathered?
2. Learn from a role model – someone who converses easily. What behaviors can you “borrow” and make your own?
3. Take a break. Go walk around the hotel lobby or enjoy a snack. You don’t have to be “on” all the time.
4. Enjoy listening. Ask good questions. “How did you first get interested in xyz?” “What’s a typical day like in your line of work?” “What are you looking forward to this year?”
5. Find a task. What do the organizers need help with? The microphones? The nametag table? Taking on a role often leads to conversation.
(Want more? Listen: Networking Know-How, 80-minute audio workshop.)

48. Spend Time To Build Your Network
Our studies show, that on average, it takes about 6 contacts with someone before they know who you are, what you do, and that they can trust you. This is why being active in associations, trade groups, affinity

groups, and clubs is so important – repeated contact gives people several chances to experience your character and competence. Look at all the sayings that remind us of this truth:

- “You can’t set a hen to roost in the morning and get egg salad for lunch.”
- “If you want your ship to come in, you’ve got to build a dock.”
- “Dig your well before you’re thirsty.”

So your job as a great connector is to create those repeated contacts. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 147)

**49. Understand Reciprocity**
Psychologists have discovered that, if you give somebody something, he will try to give you something back. It gets even better. If you give somebody something, he’ll want to give you more than you gave him. This Reciprocity Principle means that giving is the key to getting results from your networking.
(Want more? Listen: *Networking Know-How*, 80-minute audio workshop.)

**50. Go Off-line**

More than 2/3 of white-collar jobs are found through networking. It doesn’t make sense, then, to spend most of your job-hunting time on line. Put your time and energy on the job-finding strategy – networking – that promises the best pay-off. Becoming the best networker you can be is the smartest thing you can do to find a job. (Want more? See *Make Your Contacts Count*, pg. 233)

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To find out more – see next page.
Networking is the pivotal professional capability in today’s workplace, and Contacts Count is the premier training company offering a wide variety of learning opportunities nationwide.

To find out more about networking at its best, go to www.ContactsCount.com

- Call Lynne Waymon at 301-589-8633 to book a keynote, workshop, or webinar for your group or to license the Contacts Count Program for your organization.

- Order the audio CD Networking Know-How: The Contacts Count System for Savvy Professionals and Smart Companies to hear an 80-minute “live” workshop on the rules and tools of networking, with Lynne Waymon, nationally known expert.


- Sign up for our complimentary Contacts Count e-mail newsletter. Every 6-8 weeks, short, practical, innovative tips, examples, stories of how to become the natural and only choice. The best way to stay in touch!

- If you would like to apply for our Train the Trainer Program and become a certified Contacts Count Presenter, call Lynne Waymon at 301-589-8633.

- If you think a layoff, downsizing, merger, or outsourcing is in your future go to www.FireProofYourCareer.com Order the FireProof Your Career ToolKit, 5 audio and 5 print aids to help you protect your career future - no matter what happens to your job.

- If you are already in a job search situation – or have friends who are – then purchase and download our booklet called Job Hunt: 50 Networking Tips. Only $3.99! Fifty networking tips to help you land your next job.