YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM®

# Networking for Employment

## Facilitator Guide

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# Networking for Employment

Facilitator Note:

*The following two symbols are used as indicators:*
💻 *(computer) indicates it is time to advance the slide on the associated PowerPoint;*
✋ *(hand) indicates there is an exercise associated with the content.*

*Essential class content is noted in* ***bold****.*

*All class handouts are available for download on the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified as online only in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.*

## Class Description:

This class covers the importance of networking and discusses methods to expand a network of contacts as a primary job search strategy.

## Stage:

Pre-deployment, During deployment, Post-deployment

## DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this class has been developed for the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has reviewed the class and is responsible for content management.

## Audience:

YRRP attendees

## Time:

45 minutes

## Equipment:

- Projector
- Laptop
- Pens

## Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- PowerPoint Presentation
  1. Networking for Employment
  2. Objectives
  3. True or False?
  4. Networking and the Job Search
  5. The Hidden Job Market
  6. Personalize the Job Search by Networking
  7. Expanding Your Network
  8. Information Interviews
  9. Interview Questions
  10. Information Interviewing Exercise
  11. Online Networking
  12. LinkedIn
  13. LinkedIn Basics
  14. Your Online Brand
  15. Structure Your Networking
  16. Design Your Networking Plan
  17. Review of Objectives
  18. Networking for Employment
- Handouts
  1. My Strategic Networking Plan
  2. Information Interview Questions

## Exercises:

1. My Strategic Networking Plan
2. Information Interview Exercise
3. Google Yourself
4. My Strategic Networking Plan

## Objectives:

After completing this class, participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify methods to expand a network of contacts.
2. Identify questions to ask during an information interview.
3. Develop an individual networking plan.

# Introduction

## SHOW Slide 1: Networking for Employment

Facilitator Note:

*Introduce yourself as the facilitator. State your name, military experience or affiliation, and perhaps one additional brief bit of relevant personal information that establishes your credibility (i.e., your professional training or experience).*

*Please limit your personal introduction to no more than 2 minutes to maximize the time attendees are able to engage with course content, practice skills, and participate in self-reflection activities.*

Welcome to the Networking for Employment class. There are many strategies you can use to find a job. During this class, you will learn how to use networking as a primary job search strategy. We will explore how you can expand your current network of contacts. We will discuss how to use online professional networking sites to access existing contacts and make new contacts. You will learn how to conduct an information interview using the POWER technique. By the end of the class, you will begin designing a strategic, personalized networking plan that will guide your networking activity to help you find employment opportunities.

## SHOW Slide 2: Objectives

After completing this class, you will be able to do the following:

1. **Identify methods to expand a network of contacts.**
2. **Identify questions to ask during an information interview.**
3. **Develop an individual networking plan.**

# The Importance of Networking

## SHOW Slide 3: True or False?

Let's take a look at some statements about networking and the job search. When I show a statement, determine if it is true or false. If you think it is false, let me know what you believe the correct information should be.

45% of jobs are obtained through networking. True or False?

*CLICK to bring up the answer.*

This is a false statement because 70-80% of jobs are obtained through networking.

What about this statement: 75% of all jobs are advertised, and 25% of all jobs are not advertised. True or False?

*CLICK to bring up the answer.*

Both of them are false. It is actually the reverse.

- 15% of all jobs are advertised.
- 85% of all jobs are not advertised.

In addition, 70-80% of jobs are obtained through networking

Were you surprised by these answers? Why or why not?

*PAUSE for responses.*

## SHOW Slide 4: Networking and the Job Search

**Most job seekers spend the majority of their time searching for a job on the open job market where jobs are advertised** (Kaufman, 2011).

Why do you think job seekers spend the majority of their job-search time in the open job market?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: most people think available jobs are advertised; most people do not know about the hidden job market where jobs are not advertised; answering job ads online is easier, quicker, and more straightforward)*

## SHOW Slide 5: The Hidden Job Market

Why do you think networking is a helpful way to access the hidden job market?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: it is not what you know, but who you know; people want to hire good people, not what is on a resume; networking personalizes the hiring process)*

Remember that you need to be strategic in how you spend your job-search time. **You can focus on utilizing the hidden job market by networking** (Van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000).

## SHOW Slide 6: Personalize the Job Search by Networking

Think about what happens during the traditional job search. You recently sent your resume to an organization that advertised a job opening. You are excited about this opportunity; it seems perfectly suited for you. You have relevant skills and experiences and have included these in your resume, and you have spent days perfecting your resume and cover letter. You know you could be successful in this position.

Meanwhile, the recruiter is sitting in his or her office with over 100 resumes, and each has only subtle differences in color, style, and typed content. With this large number of resumes, the recruiter executes a quick scan of each resume and works to get through the stack. Did the recruiter really get to know the person behind that piece of paper?

**The job search process is impersonal by nature. Your resume and cover letter are being analyzed; your enthusiasm, communication skills, positive attitude, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and sense of humor are not. You must create situations in which you, the whole person, is assessed and evaluated. How do you do that? Networking is the primary way to personalize the job search** (Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010; Savickas et al., 2009). So, let's discuss what networking means and how you can use it to find a job.

# Expanding Your Network

## SHOW Slide 7: Expanding Your Network

Let's examine the steps or stages of networking. Begin by thinking about ways that you can expand your existing network of contacts.

Who are your networking contacts?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: people you know who are in career fields and jobs you want to pursue; people in careers of interest that your friends, family, and other associates know)*

How can you expand your network of contacts?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: friends; colleagues; extended family members, such as aunts, uncles, cousins; all of the people they know)*

There are potentially hundreds of people your friends, colleagues, and extended family members know. There is a strong possibility that at least a half a dozen are people in careers that you are interested in pursuing. You could start by drafting an email and asking your friends, colleagues, and extended family members if they know someone in

your career field of interest.

You can organize your contacts by category. Contacts can be separated into three groups: relevant, personal, or association. Relevant contacts are people whom you know who are in careers of interest to you. Personal contacts are people whom you know personally (e.g., friends, family) who are not in careers of interest. Association contacts are people you know through work, church, your alma mater, your children's friends' parents, your neighbors, and so on. These are people who you may not call your friends or family, but you know them through some association. In addition, **there are resources that could significantly help expand your association contacts. A few examples are alumni directories or databases (many high schools and universities have these), Service branch directories, and LinkedIn.** Can you think of any others?

*PAUSE for responses*.

## EXERCISE 1: My Strategic Networking Plan

Facilitator Note:

*Handout 1 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is for participants to list their relevant, personal, and association contacts. Participants will complete Goals #1 and 2. This should take approximately 7 minutes.*

Turn to **Handout 1: My Strategic Networking Plan.** Complete the section entitled Goal #1 by developing a list of your existing relevant, personal, and association contacts.

*STOP after 5 minutes.*

Were you able to write at least one contact per category?

*PAUSE for responses.*

As we go through the rest of the class and you think of someone else or another resource to expand your network, add these to your contacts.

Now, complete Goal #2. Once you decide on your relevant contacts, you can use this section to organize yourself and determine whom you will contact and when.

*STOP after 2 minutes.*

## Conducting Information Interviews

## SHOW Slide 8: Information Interviews

Now you have some contacts. So, let's see how you can expand your network. What should you do with the contacts you have identified?

*PAUSE for responses.*

One tool you can use is an information interview (Crosby, 2002; University of Massachusetts Amherst, n.d.). **An information interview is an interview that you can conduct to gather information or learn more about a career field of interest.** The goal is to build strong relationships with networking contacts in your career field of interest. Information interviews can be done over the phone, via videoconference, or in person. Remember that **an information interview is about expanding your network, not necessarily getting a job. So when you go to an information interview, don't push your resume and skills too hard**. You are there to listen and learn, not necessarily sell yourself. Employers can be turned off by someone stating they want to "learn more about the field, company, etc." only to arrive and attempt to over-sell him or herself.

Who could you interview?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: relevant contacts; those in careers of interest; personal contacts, such as family and friends; association contacts)*

## SHOW Slide 9: Interview Questions

Facilitator Note:

*Handout 2 will be referenced.*

The POWER acronym is proposed as a way to progress logically through the set of questions.

**P**erson you are interviewing
**O**rganization of your contact
**W**ork field of contact
**E**xplore opportunities within their company or within the field
**R**eferrals to other contacts and organizations

There is some strategy associated with conducting Information Interviews and networking. One of the main goals of Information Interviewing is to build strong relationships with contacts in your career field. As such, it is recommended that you avoid beginning an interview by asking about available internships or jobs.

**Handout 2: Information Interview Questions** contains a complete list of the interview questions.

When using the POWER acronym, you will follow a strategy associated with conducting information interviews and networking. **When you methodically answer the questions in this progression, it will keep you organized, ensure you cover all of the relevant questions, and help you avoid prematurely asking about potential internships or jobs.** Using POWER will keep you focused on building relationships with networking contacts in your field of interest, which is a key benefit of information interviewing. **This also demonstrates your interest in the individuals you are *interviewing* by allowing them to talk about their careers, and, through this process, you may determine whether this field is still interesting to you** (Crosby, 2002, University of Massachusetts Amherst, n.d.).

**Important tips to help you conduct an information interview** include the following:

- **Be patient**
- **Use a non-entitled approach and do not expect a job**
- **Be respectful and show consideration for time** (e.g., if you said, "I'll only take 30 minutes," be respectful and wrap it up in 30 minutes) (Bellis, 2018)
- **Offer to return the favor** (e.g., before leaving, it is respectful to ask/offer if there is anything you can to do return the favor); you may be able to offer something in return (e.g., perhaps their child is considering joining the military and would like to speak to someone about his or her experience); most employers will decline, but, if there is an opportunity to return the favor, it will keep the relationship going
- **Thank the employer at the end of the interview and afterward via email or thank you note**
- **Attempt to conduct multiple informational interviews within an industry, especially if you are making major decisions about a career field, in order to gain multiple perspectives on others' experiences** (Bellis, 2018)

## SHOW Slide 10: Information Interviewing Exercise

## EXERCISE 2: Information Interview Exercise

Facilitator Note:

*The purpose of this exercise is for participants to practice conducting an information interview. This should take approximately 15 minutes. Handouts 1 and 2 will be referenced.*

Now, you will have an opportunity to practice information interviewing. Please choose a partner. Share with your partner your favorite past job or position (provide the position title and organization). Use the questions provided on the slide or other questions on **Handout 2: Information Interview Questions** to conduct a short information interview to learn more about your partner's job. Once complete, switch roles and repeat the process so you each gain experience in conducting the interview and being interviewed.

*The following questions are listed on the slide:*

- *What are your day-to-day duties and responsibilities?*
- *What is your company's mission?*
- *How did you originally get into this field?*
- *What credentials, degrees, licenses, experiences, or trainings are required for entry into this field?*
- *Who else would you recommend I contact for more information about this career?*

*STOP after 10 minutes.*

*PAUSE for responses after each question.*

How did you feel asking the questions?

What about responding to the questions?

What did you learn about your interviewing questions?

Why is it important to have a solid list of questions when you are doing an information interview?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: prior planning of what you want to know about or ask; so you do not forget what you want to know or ask)*

What is your next step in expanding your contacts by using the information interview?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: identify prospective people to interview; prepare questions for interview; conduct interview)*

Information interviewing is truly a win-win situation when approached in this manner. Most people enjoy talking about themselves and their previous experiences. Again, remember that a complete list of Information Interview Questions is available in Handout 2.

Refer to **Handout 1: My Strategic Networking Plan**. Goals #3, 4, and 5 will help you organize the people you will contact for information interviews, prepare your questions, conduct your interviews, and to remind yourself when to contact those individuals.

*PAUSE for participants to look over Handouts 1 and 2.*

## Navigating Online Networking

### 💻 SHOW Slide 11: Online Networking

**Online networking is another way to expand your contacts.**

What is online networking?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: networking through email; digital chats; social media; professional networking sites)*

What is the difference between online professional networking and online social networking?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: professional networking is intended for career development; social networking is intended to provide another communication avenue for friends, family, and groups)*

What is an example of an online professional networking website?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: LinkedIn; Xing)*

What is an example of an online social networking website?

*PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: Facebook; Twitter; Pinterest; Tumblr)*

General professional online networking sites can help professionals of all career fields network. Let's look at one of these sites.

## SHOW Slide 12: LinkedIn

*PAUSE for responses after each question.*

Have you heard of LinkedIn?

Does anyone use it?

LinkedIn is a popular, online, business-oriented social and professional networking site. It can be used as a networking tool to help you cultivate, maintain, and expand your professional network. **The basic services provided by LinkedIn are free**. As a member, you can search for new or existing contacts by connecting with them through the site. Once you have made your initial connections, you can access the connections of your existing contacts and expand your professional network. Using this expanded network, you can request introductions to new connections through your mutual contact.

**In order to become a member on LinkedIn, you need to create a profile. Your profile lists your work history, education, and other pertinent information that you wish to share. You can choose to make your profile open to the public. Remember that prospective employers may use LinkedIn as a means to review the credentials and network connections of job applicants**.

LinkedIn may also be used to accomplish the following:

- Join groups relevant to your job search;
- Make connections that lead to information interview requests;
- Apply for jobs posted on LinkedIn;
- Research the credentials of other people who hold positions of interest to you;
- Research companies that you may target for employment.

The best way to learn about the services and benefits that LinkedIn offers to people searching for employment is to view the Help page on the LinkedIn website. Here, information can be found about how to set up your profile, find people using your existing email contacts, send requests for connections, and more.

## SHOW Slide 13: LinkedIn Basics

Having an effective LinkedIn profile will help your networking, and it will help your job search. If you are not on LinkedIn, you are missing an opportunity to expand your network and connect with potential employers.

Did you know?

- There are 26 million companies on LinkedIn and 260 million active members
- There is an average of 15 million active job postings on LinkedIn
- More than 90% of recruiters used LinkedIn regularly (Aslam, 2019)

- You can add your LinkedIn URL to your resume, which demonstrates that you are current with technology, and this may draw some employers to view your additional experiences beyond those in your resume

There are some simple **tips you can use to improve your LinkedIn profile**:

- **Use a professional profile picture; choose one that is professionally done or, at least free, from clutter. Avoid *selfie* style photos**. LinkedIn has reported that profiles with professional headshots receive 14 times more views than profiles that did not use professional headshots.
- **Focus on your employment and educational experiences, which may include publications, presentations, and projects. Research demonstrates that employers are less focused on volunteer or social activities** (Chiang & Suen, 2015).
- **Be honest. Research demonstrates that employers are more likely to contact individuals if they find the content on their profile to be credible and authentic** (Chiang & Suen, 2015).
- Not having an online profile can limit your marketing and job opportunities. If you don't have a LinkedIn profile, create one!

## SHOW Slide 14: Your Online Brand

## EXERCISE 3: Google Yourself

Facilitator Note:

*The purpose of this exercise is for participants to Google themselves. This should take approximately 5 minutes.*

Have you ever Googled yourself? **Try it. What comes up when you type in your full name, your full name with middle initial, your full name with your military title, and your full name with your academic degree(s)?**

*PAUSE for responses.*

**What comes up is part of your *online brand*. Sometimes this is called your *digital brand,* and the process of creating your brand is sometimes known as personal branding (although this term is not exclusively tied to online presence).**

**All online activity leaves a digital footprint, and everything you do online can be tracked, analyzed, evaluated, and shared**.

Employers regularly search for candidate information online (Smith, 2013) and use this

information to make hiring decisions. **In studies, employers have cited inappropriate pictures; evidence of drug/alcohol use; negative comments about previous employers; and discriminatory comments related to race, gender, or religion as reasons for not making employment offers upon review of social media profiles** (Baert, 2018; Smith, 2013). **While privacy features may help, they are not a guarantee of privacy.**

Make sure that whatever you post is appropriate. Remove posts that are damaging or could be negatively viewed by potential employers.

**You can also build up your online brand by posting content that is professional and demonstrates your expertise in the area of employment you are seeking. You can use LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media accounts to publicly post or share information about your expertise, professional goals, and values**.

## SHOW Slide 15: Structure Your Networking

Networking is not always straightforward, and it can feel overwhelming. To make it more manageable, structure your networking activity into numerous, concrete tasks. Place these tasks into a timetable with established deadlines to keep you moving forward.

**As you start networking, keep track of your networking interactions. To track and maintain your progress, keep a networking log or report that details who you networked with, when, and where it took place and what the next steps are in pursuing this connection. Staying disciplined and organized is an advantage in your job search** (Koen et al., 2010).

# Design Your Networking Plan

## SHOW Slide 16: Design Your Networking Plan

## EXERCISE 4: My Strategic Networking Plan

Facilitator Note:

*Handout 1 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is for participants to review and finish completing their individual networking plans. This should take approximately 10 minutes.*

Now, I would like you to review and continue working on your networking plan. The networking plan you create can serve as an outline and can guide your networking activity. Remember, networking is one of the easiest methods to use in a job search, yet many people put it off. Creating a plan and assigning deadlines can help you stay on track (Koen et al., 2010). Note that the last goal listed on your handout is to follow up and stay visible. Remember, track all of your interactions to help you determine the next steps in networking to find a job.

Please take some time to review and add any missing or additional information to **Handout 1: My Strategic Networking Plan.** If you have not completed Goals #3, 4, and 5, go ahead and do so now.

*STOP the exercise after 10 minutes.*

Do you feel prepared to execute your networking plan?

*PAUSE for responses*.

# Summary

## SHOW Slide 17: Review of Objectives

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **How can you expand your network of contacts?** *PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: personal contacts, alumni directories/databases; Service branch directories; LinkedIn; Information Interviews)*

2. **What is a way to conduct information interviews?** *PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: POWER: Person, Organization, Work Field, Explore*

*Opportunities, Referral)*

3. **Have you begun to develop your individual networking plan?** *PAUSE for responses.*

## SHOW Slide 18: Networking for Employment

Thank you, and please complete your evaluation for this class.

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