



At a Glance: Create a professional network. Identify, reach out to, and maintain connections with potential collaborators, mentors, colleagues, and employers. Search for jobs in your target career area.

Understanding Networking & Job Search

Sometimes looking for a job can be as simple as sending off a copy of your cover letter and CV in response to a posting and waiting to get called for an interview. But what happens if they don't call you back? What if you can't find any postings in your chosen field? Or, what if the job of your dreams is so new it doesn't even exist yet? In this case, learning how to leverage your network of professional contacts and expand your job search tools beyond the simple CV+cover letter application process can be a valuable skill in finding a job that is right for you.

Why does it matter?

Surveys regularly show that the majority of available jobs are never publicly advertised¹ and that 80% of people find jobs through someone they know.² In fact, most employers publicly advertise jobs on an as needed basis only, when other more informal methods have failed to pay off³ favouring internal candidates or candidates referred from members within their own professional network to new or unknown applicants. Thus, in order to access the opportunities of this "hidden" job market, you may need to step out of your comfort zone and try something new.

Cultivating Networking & Job Search

Networking can at first seem like a scary concept, bringing up visions of excruciating small-talk over \$20 cocktails at branded "networking events." However, while awkwardly exchanging business cards over expensive drinks can be an aspect of networking, there is much more to it than this. In simple terms, networking is the process of connecting: people with ideas, people with opportunities, and people with products and services. Keep in mind that most people, even those who don't know you that well, will be happy to help you out if you can make it obvious to them why they should help and if you can make this process as easy as possible. Getting crystal clear with yourself about [what your unique skills, values, and motivations](#) are will allow you to articulate these qualities to others. This kind of clarity will also help you to have confidence when starting your job search and when networking with people you don't know very well. Rather than trying to anticipate the needs of a potential job or employer, focus instead on authentically communicating who you are and what it is you have to offer. This will put you in a much better position to attract the people and opportunities that are a good fit to you. For support in clarifying your unique set of skills and qualities, check out the IDF [Healthy Living](#) and [Self-Knowledge](#) Handouts or make an appointment with a CaPS career counsellor.

It is rare that the perfect job will fall into your lap. However, you may be pleasantly surprised at how many opportunities open up for you through reaching out to your network of family, friends, professional contacts, or even potential employers. Keep in mind that not all of your conversations may go the way you hoped they would. This is normal. Don't give up! Keep trying, and if you need some support in this area, check out the IDF [Resilience](#) Handout, or make an appointment with a CaPS career counsellor.

Quick Guide to Start Your Job Search

- **Be proactive:** A potential employer has no idea you would love to work for them unless you initiate contact. Seek out opportunities, reach out to potential employers, and be bold!

- **Contact employers you'd like to work for:** 25% of all job seekers obtain positions by “cold” contacting employers. This involves researching organizations and companies of interest and making contact with them, regardless of whether or not you have been referred. Actively apply, even if they are not advertising openings. Many employers do accept and review CVs from applicants who have good “fit” (skills and background) and have taken the initiative to seek out the organization.

- **Show your face:** when possible, make your enquiries and drop off your applications in person. Your chances of having a conversation with someone and finding out more about the organization are much higher! Maintain an updated profile on professional networking sites such as LinkedIn.

- **Expand your network:** Make a list of your primary contacts (people you already know such as friends, family, neighbours, professors, members of your community, etc.) and ask for referrals from these primary contacts to anyone working in your target field/company. Follow up with these secondary contacts and, if possible arrange informational interviews. Actively create new contacts through resources like the McGill Mentor Program, join a professional association in your field and/or attend career-related conferences and events, or consider doing an internship or volunteer work in the area of your interest.

- **Ask for advice:** Most people are not in a position to “give” you a job but they can (and often love to) share their ideas, advice, and information! Initiate conversations about your job search, ask to be connected to the people, information, or resources they may know that is relevant to your field. Make an appointment at McGill Career Planning Service (CaPS) to discuss your job search in more detail.

- **Follow-up:** Many job seekers neglect this crucial step. As long as you are polite and professional, sending a follow-up email or making a second phone call is more than just ok, it's necessary. Be professional, courteous and clear. Thank people for their time and assistance.

Quick Guide to Information Interviews

- **What are they?** An information interview involves contacting and talking with someone in a field and/or company of interest to increase your knowledge of the sector and receive advice and information from someone with concrete experience in this area.
- **Who can you talk to?** Anyone who knows about the work you would like to do. Ideally, someone employed in your field of interest or an organization or sector where you would like to work.
- **Why would I do this?** To help you fine tune your career objectives, to discover additional possibilities or areas of interest, and to develop contacts and potential mentors in your field.
- **How should I contact them?** Start with an email. Follow-up with a call, if need be. Arrange a meeting. Consult the CaPS [Information Interviews](#) guide for detailed guidance on what questions to ask at your interview.

Quick Guide to Contacting Employers

- **Be persistent, polite, and professional:** Do not give up after sending one email. The recipient could have been busy, have forgotten, been out of the office, sick...anything. It is completely ok to follow up with a 2nd email or phone call, as long as you are courteous.
- **They're busy...REALLY busy:** Remember that your request is likely in competition with multiple priorities. Even the most organized person has only 24hrs in a day so remember to show respect for their time.
- **Have a clear objective:** Be articulate about why you are contacting this person/organization in particular. Most people are willing and happy to help if you are clear about how they can do so. Plan your objective(s) out clearly before initiating contact so you can communicate concisely. Consult the CaPS [How to Contact Employers](#) guide for assistance.
- **Choose your communication channel:** Deciding whether to reach out by email, phone, or in person will vary depending on the information you have and what is practically feasible. When in doubt, the more active and direct the method, the better.

Taking Action & Resources

Professional Development & Training

- Check [myInvolvement](#) for upcoming workshops and programs by searching for events tagged with this category: Networking & Job Search

Gaining Experience

- Volunteer in student clubs and local community organizations and expand your network: [Engage McGill](#) | [McGill Volunteering Opportunities](#)
- Join the [Mentor Program](#) to connect with McGill alumni for career development.

Groups & Associations

- [McGillConnect](#): McGill's networking portal. You can find mentors or recruit talents from the global McGill community. You can also search for groups and connect others through the [Global Network](#)
- [McGill Career Planning Service \(CaPS\) and Alumni Exchange LinkedIn Group](#) (Must be a LinkedIn member to access the group): This group aims to help students and recent graduates build a solid career network, share job search experience, build mentoring opportunities and expand career options.
- [Ten Thousand Coffees](#): an online networking platform that connects job seekers with mentors and peers in your field, in person or online.
- [YES Montreal](#): a non-profit, community-driven English-language service provider with workshops and programming that help support job seekers and entrepreneurs to find job.

Websites

- [McGill Career Planning Services - Networking](#): Guides, resources and groups to join to expand your network.

Books & Articles

- Baber, A., & Waymon, L. (2007). *Make your contacts count: Networking know-how for business and career success*. New York: AMACOM. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/123414915>
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- Levine, A. G. (2015). *Networking for nerds: Find, access and land hidden game-changing career opportunities everywhere*. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/900158995>
- Zack, D. (2010). *Networking for people who hate networking: A field guide for introverts, the overwhelmed, and the underconnected*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Pub. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/659283230>

Need Help?

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References

¹ [How to Find Jobs. Bottomer, J. \(2018\).](#)

² [Waiting for source](#)

³ [How to Find Jobs. Bottomer, J. \(2018\).](#)