

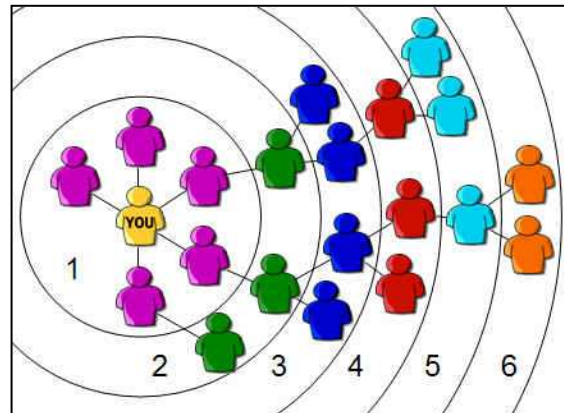
Social Networking

Studies conducted by Harvard University, Columbia University and other venerable academic institutions have upheld the fact that most job vacancies are filled through networking. The exact percentage varies based on prevailing conditions in the labor market (i.e., whether it is an employer’s market or a job seeker’s market), but it is estimated that on average, 80% of all jobs are obtained through personal recommendation or referral.

While this gives credence to the old cliché, *“It’s not what you know - it’s whom you know,”* dedicated social networking takes this to the next tier - *“It’s not whom you know - it’s whom **THEY** know.”*

In today’s shrinking world, there is wide belief that we are all only “six degrees” away from each person on Earth.

- ▶ We are all one step away from each person we know, and two steps away from each person they know. Extrapolate these further using six concentric rings and you can see the relationship out to six degrees of separation.



Though people have always interacted collectively, the Internet gave rise to the popular twenty-first century “Social Networking” phenomenon through a variety of on-line relationship building tools.

Social Networking and Your Career

If 80% of all jobs people hold are filled by referral or personal recommendation, it is logical that individuals would want to expand their networks continually, and Internet social networks provide easy forums for achieving this.

Since their introduction in 1997 these sites have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated on-line networking into their daily routine. There are hundreds of such sites - some focused on shared interests - professional, educational, cultural, sexual, religious, political, hobbies, and more - and others catering to wholly diverse audiences.

User Profiles & Contact Lists

Unlike conventional networking, social networking allows users to make connections that would not otherwise be made. This is achieved by allowing users to create on-line profiles and contact lists viewable by their first degree connections, which in turn facilitates those contacts to make new connections pursuant to their interests.

Profile and contact list visibility varies by site & user discretion; some sites offer users privacy options to control who may view their information.

Groups

Many social networking sites host special interest groups for their users, and a good number allow registered users to create and host their own groups in the site's directory, so if you don't find a group relevant to your career interests, start your own.

These alliances can be valuable in promoting one's career in a number of ways:

- ▶ Maintaining relationships with existing contacts in your field.
- ▶ Making new contacts in your line of work.
- ▶ Creating an on-line identity that brands your professional expertise.
- ▶ Keeping up-to-date on the latest developments in the group's theme.
- ▶ Having a dedicated forum from which to seek advice on challenging issues.



Question & Answer Blogs

Most sites offer topical question and answer forums for member queries. These are also known as blogs - which is short for web logs.



Answering questions related to your specialty is a good way to make new connections and to assert expertise in your field.

Many sites allow the "asker" to vote for "Best Answer," so accumulating a significant number of Best Answer verdicts helps promote your on-line identity as a subject-matter expert in your profession.



NOTE: Before you start creating profiles and blog postings, readers are urged to download a companion article titled, "**Internet Imprudence Can Ruin You with a Single Click.**"

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