

Need advice to
make your next
career move?

Science Careers Forum
www.ScienceCareers.org



Science



Magazine

News

Signaling

Careers

Multimedia

Collections

Science Careers From the journal *Science*

Jobs

Funding

Meetings and Events

Career Development

For Advertisers

About Science Careers

[Science Home](#) > [Science Careers](#) > [Career Development](#) > [Previous Issues](#) > [2005](#) > [2005-02-18](#) > Jensen

CAREER DEVELOPMENT : ARTICLES

E-Mail This Article Print This Article Share This



Tooling Up: More than Just a Job-Seeking Skill

Dave Jensen
United States
18 February 2005

DAVID G. JENSEN, A WRITER AND SPEAKER ON CAREER ISSUES WORLDWIDE, IS THE FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CAREERTRAX INC., A BIOTECHNOLOGY AND PHARMACEUTICAL CONSULTING FIRM LOCATED IN SEDONA, ARIZONA.

Networking Ability Forecasts Future Career Success

"Networking is a constant process of giving and receiving--of asking for and offering help. By putting people in contact with one another, by giving your time and expertise and sharing them freely, the pie gets bigger for everyone." - Keith Ferrazzi, author of *Never Eat Alone*

Every now and then, despite all that has been written about networking on Next Wave and in the lay press, some brave soul will actually admit that he doesn't quite understand what networking is, exactly. And that's okay, because it isn't taught in grad school. In fact, it doesn't show up on the radar screen of most professors.

That always baffled me until I realized that many faculty believe that networking is, at best, just another job-seeking tool, something that the graduate career center--if there is one--should teach. But before you relegate networking to the dust bin of job skills that get used five or six times in a lifetime, read my definition: *Networking is the process of establishing links between people with the intent to promote communication for mutual benefit.*

Would you say that establishing links with others would work best if done only on an every-now-and-again basis? Or does it make more sense to foster and nurture these connections so that, in time, they become stronger and even more useful?

Networking Is a Learnable Skill Like Any Other

Behavioral psychologists say that there are three phases to learning a new skill. The first phase is being inept: You are very aware of your incompetence. In the second phase you may have mastered the skill, but you remain conscious of every minute aspect of the process. You watch your performance closely, never allowing your conscious mind to stray from your newly acquired technique. In the third and final stage, which takes a long time to achieve, you master the skill to such a degree that you take it on completely unconsciously, allowing your thoughts to move on to more pressing matters even as you put your new skill into effective practice.

It is this third phase that Keith Ferrazzi, successful businessman and author, believes we need to reach to truly appreciate the power of networking. His new book, *Never Eat Alone* (Currency-Doubleday, 2005), takes networking from a job-seeking tool to a philosophy. Along the way the reader gains a much better understanding of why those who are in the top 1% of their fields--whether science or

BUSINESS OFFICE FEATURES

Not-So-Lost in Translation
17 April 2008

A Boost for Vaccine Research
28 March 2008

EXODUS TO ASIA: Research Opportunities Abound
21 March 2008

[More](#)

CAREER TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Current Employers

Learn more about the employers advertising positions on our site.

Science Careers Forum

Post a question, get an answer on our online community

Graduate Programs

Browse our database of program profiles

How-To Guides

Writing a resume/CV
Beating the interview
Getting funding
Managing a lab and staff
Building your network

Salary Tools

Find out how much you're worth with our salary calculator

[To Advertise](#) [Find Products](#)

finance--consider networking crucial to their success.

What Phase Have *You* Reached in Learning to Network?

Think about what it was like when you were 16 or 17 years old, and you were learning to drive your parents' car. When you first got in that driver's seat, your mother or father beside you, you were almost paralyzed by a feeling of total incompetence. Put yourself in that picture and remember how you felt when you got behind the wheel, entering phase one of the learning process.

Many scientists experience this feeling again when they are told by their career advisors that they must "get out there and network" to secure a job. Some struggle with it; they make a few contacts with friends, socialize at conferences, but end up relying mostly on other skills that they are more comfortable with. They'll sit quietly applying online to companies instead of facing up to the discomfort of learning a critical new technique. In short, they never make it past that first phase.

Others move beyond the fear to develop their job-search network, but remain uncomfortable while they are out there making contacts. They are so uncomfortable that they stop networking once they land their jobs. While they may have made it to the second phase, they never go any further. They put away their networking skills until they need them again for their next job search.

Finally, there are those who push past the initial discomfort and recognize that the process of networking goes on forever, in many aspects of professional life, and not only at job-search time. Networking at scientific conferences--something they do unconsciously--leads to new opportunities for collaboration, invitations to lecture, unsought job offers, and other good things.

At this stage they realize that the benefits of networking are not only professional; they value their contacts, many of whom have turned into lifelong friends and acquaintances. For people who make it to phase three, networking is as essential as any other communication skill, and it is unconsciously integrated into their daily routine. Just like driving a car, you reach a point where you don't even think about it any longer.

Where Does a Network Begin?

Because, oftentimes, the immediate and perhaps only goal is to find a job, inexperienced networkers often view contacts inside companies as valuable. In actuality, job leads can come from just about any direction, many of them surprising.

Never Eat Alone reminded me how large our initial networks--the ones most of us start out with before we consciously start to network--really are. I used to talk about this in my networking seminars, and it was refreshing to hear Mr. Ferrazzi describe it: friends, relatives, friends of relatives, relatives of friends, your spouse's or significant other's relatives and acquaintances, current and former colleagues, members of professional and social organizations, past and present neighbors, people you went to school with, church members, former teachers and employers, people you socialize with, and people who provide a service or sell you products. It's a long list, from people in your neighborhood, to the salespeople who sell you reagents, to people from far away that you may only have met on the Internet.

Still, many scientists exhaust these contacts in the first few weeks and then wonder where to go next. At this point a sudden shift takes place. No longer are you contacting friends or people with whom you have a mutual acquaintance. You've entered what I call the "cold call zone."

Gems From An Expert: Networking Tips from *Never Eat Alone*

- Never keep score. If your interactions are ruled by generosity, your rewards will follow.
- Your relationships with others are your finest, most credible expression of who you are and what you have to offer.
- Give your time and expertise freely. It is like Miracle-Gro® for networks.
- The best time to build a network is before you need it.
- Do your homework. Never pick up the phone or plan an introduction before knowing as much as possible about your contact.
- There's no need to ponder who picks up the lunch check. Generosity is the key to success.
- With networking, it's better to give before you receive.
- Don't come to the party empty-handed. You're only as good as what you give away.
- Social scientists are proving that people who are more connected with other people live longer and are healthier.

Succeeding in the Cold Call Zone

In one of her novels, author Marilyn French wrote the perfect description of what it is like to enter the

cold call zone:

I discovered you never know yourself until you're tested, and that you don't even know you're being tested until afterwards, and that in fact there isn't anyone giving the test except yourself.

The cold call zone is indeed a test, weeding out those who don't have the stamina to make introductions to strangers and say good things about themselves. It's all a bit easier when the cold calls you make are to what I call "Peer + 2" contacts. (See [Networking Scenarios, Part One](#) and [Networking Scenarios, Part Two](#)).

This term--"Peer+2"--should remind you that often the best cold calls are to people who are just a couple of years past you in experience. They'll be receptive to talking about how they made the transition to their job, and there will be some empathy for your situation since they were in your shoes not that long ago. Another strong plus for Peer + 2 contacts is that they are considerably easier to reach than the Director of Research.

On the other hand, you should never hesitate to contact the top people in your field. While you may not have more than a few moments with a well-published investigator, you never know when a hiring manager or recruiter will call that person seeking to fill a job. Dr. Arnold Demain, a distinguished professor for 32 years at MIT, would always take calls from recruiters and share with them the CVs of people who called to introduce themselves. Many other top people do the same.

Does Networking Have to Change Your Life?

Networking is much more than a job-seeking routine; it's a life-long career enhancement tool. But it does not have to become a life philosophy, something that you live for, as Keith Ferrazzi described in his book. Personally, I am a quiet person, still inclined to hang around the edges of cocktail gatherings after all these years of networking. At this point of my life, I'm not likely to become a radically outgoing extrovert. But that's okay; that's not what it takes to be an excellent professional networker. Even if you never escape phase 2, you can still use networking to your advantage.

But even if you view networking as a means to an end--a job, professional advancement--instead of as an end in itself, it's important to at least appear to be sincerely interested in the people you interact with. The single most important lesson that I've learned, often repeated in *Never Eat Alone*, is not to sound greedy. The best networkers don't ask "Are there any openings?" within the first few minutes of the call, and they don't drop you flat if you don't have anything to offer them immediately. Every contact you make is more than just a potential job interview; it's a seed to a future relationship.

As Keith Ferrazzi says, "Great networkers have the implicit understanding that investing time and energy in building personal relationships with the right people will pay dividends. In fact, the top people all understand this dynamic. . . . They themselves used the power of their network of contacts and friends to arrive at their present station."

 [E-Mail This Article](#)  [Print This Article](#)  [Share This](#)

[Magazine](#) | [News](#) | [Signaling](#) | [Careers](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Collections](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#) | [RSS](#)
[Subscribe](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Privacy / Legal](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Contact Us](#)

© 2008 American Association for the Advancement of Science. All Rights Reserved.
AAAS is a partner of HINARI, AGORA, PatientInform, CrossRef, and COUNTER.