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The Networking Buddy System for Job-Search Success

by Clay Barrett



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What do deep sea diving, rock climbing, whitewater rafting, and a job search have in common? Success and sometimes even survival depend on using the buddy system.

Most extreme sports enthusiasts agree that having a buddy for support is the key to success; but in a job search, having a fellow job-searcher to network with and for accountability can propel your success.

Take Joan and Cathy, for example. They work in different industries and in different job roles. Both were laid off at about the same time. They met at a local networking group and hit it off immediately. They began to explore other networking opportunities together.

"Going to networking events for the first time was hard for me," Joan relates, "I tend to be shy and don't feel comfortable being the new person. I hated not knowing anyone there. But now, Cathy and I go together. It's opened up a whole new realm of events I never would have attended without her."

For Cathy, "The hardest thing for me was follow through. I'd tell myself 'I'm going to check out this new event' or set goals for my search for a certain week and just not follow through. Joan has been great in holding me accountable for my goals and keeping me on track."

Accountability -- The Buddy System in Action

Joan and Cathy have hit upon one of the most important benefits of the buddy system. Accountability!

Too many times, we fall victim to distractions from the job search. The trap of sleeping late, watching TV, and playing on the Web can ensnare us. With no one but ourselves to hold us accountable for our job-search goals and plans, time can just slip away. It's so easy to lose balance between personal needs and wants and our job search.

Joan and Cathy relate, "We have a favorite networking group that we go to each week. It meets at 7 p.m. on Monday, so we grab dinner before and

set our action plan for the week. We plan to go to one other group meeting each week and decide which one it will be over dinner. Finally, we review what was to be accomplished the previous week to make sure both of us stays on track."

Achieving Balance

The other end of the spectrum is becoming a "job search-aholic." For many of us, our identity is tied up tightly in our career, while others need a job right away just to make ends meet. No matter how great the need or desire for a new position, conducting a job search 24/7 non-stop can actually be a detriment to a successful campaign.

Once burnout sets in and enthusiasm begins to wane, how can you be at your best when you interview or even network?

The buddy system is an ideal way to protect against burnout while keeping on track! Note how Joan and Cathy have used this system:

"We help each other set reasonable goals for the week and remind each other that it's OK to go have some fun. Our rule is that our job search is like our full time job, and like any full time job, that means most weekends are off."

Joan notes, "This was especially important to me. I was setting unrealistic goals for myself. I was spending all my weekends and evenings on the Internet, searching for jobs and applying for almost everything I came across. I was so discouraged, tired and all around just burned out. Cathy helped me see that not only was I spending my time unwisely by using only the Internet for my search, but that I also needed to be more balanced so I could always keep my best face forward in the search process."

When to Leave the Buddy Behind

As with all great systems, there are times when the buddy system is best left at home.

Job fairs are one example where carpooling can be great, but once inside its time for some one on one networking. You want to be prepared to speak face to face with a recruiter and possibly even have an on-the-spot interview. This would not be a good time have you buddy by your side!

Another buddy system no-no is to take your buddy along with you to interviews. Even having the buddy wait for you in the lobby can result in points off with the interviewer.

Finally, when at a networking event, move around and meet people. Network! It's what you came for. Just because you and your buddy came together doesn't mean that you have to stay side by side the whole time. Mingle and get to know others at the event. Expand your relational network, find out information about local companies and increase your contact list! Then meet up with your buddy at the end and compare notes!

Buddy as Resource

Developing your network is an integral part of your success in a job search. Taking full advantage of all the resources available to you is key to

success. One of the most useful resources you may find just might be your job-search buddy.

Use your buddy as a sounding board for ideas and goals as well as frustrations. Keep each other balanced and on track, but know when it is appropriate to go solo.

Whether climbing Mt. Everest or looking for that dream job in your own back yard, use the helping hand of a buddy to reach maximum success.

Questions about some of the terminology used in this article? Get more information (definitions and links) on key college, career, and job-search terms by going to our [Job-Seeker's Glossary of Job-Hunting Terms](#).

A Technical Recruiter for [JSfirm](#), Clay Barrett specializes in the aviation/aerospace industry. With a background in career management and career counseling, Barrett has written a number of articles on career-search topics.

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Home Page: <http://www.quintcareers.com/>

Email: randall@quintcareers.com

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