

Finding Jobs Through Contacts

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I work in the employment industry and a large part of my business is devoted to (1) helping people identify job opportunities through consolidating job listings from hundreds of sources, (2) creating new [résumés and cover letters](#) for people from scratch and (3) mass mailing résumés to targeted employers that match the interests and the geographical preferences of the applicants. However, I believe one of the best ways for people to get a job is by utilizing their own personal contacts.

The easiest way to procure work through people you know is to simply send an email, or pick up the phone, and (I am not kidding) speak with these people about nothing at all. If the subject of your job search comes up during the conversation, great. If it does not, that's fine too. I feel this simple tactic may be the easiest way to get a job that I know of.

In sales, one of the things I've seen over and over is that salespeople are always the most excited about new leads. Salespeople spend most of their time trying to find new people to buy products and are mostly concerned with people who appear ready to buy right here and now. I see this a lot in automobile sales, for example. Picture an auto dealership where you pull up to find 10+ salespeople standing outdoors waiting to ask if they can help you. Imagine instead, if each time someone came into the dealership, the salesperson asked them for their contact information? What if that salesperson proceeded to call all his compiled contacts periodically to see if they were interested in a new car? Imagine the number of contacts this salesperson would have after 30, 60, 90, or 180 days. Would this make a difference for his sales?

This is, in fact, what the greatest car salesman of all time, Joe Girard, did in his work--he never let a customer out of his grip. According to one website:

After building homes for 13 years, Girard turned to autos. He sold cars from 1963 to 1977, starting at 267 units a year, rising to an all-time record of 1,425 units, and retiring at 855 units to write books. Girard had his own office at the dealership and hired two assistants out of his pocket, one to help recruit and market sales, one to prep new cars, assess trade-ins, and coordinate service requests. He sent out nearly 13,000 greeting cards a month to his customers, celebrating everything from Halloween to Groundhog Day. He paid out thousands to a network of people who referred sales--priests, teachers, plant foremen, students, and mechanics--before the practice was discouraged by the Big Three.

This sort of follow up--making sure that people remember you and staying in touch, is what truly builds relationships, and, in the sales market, is what translates into results. There are lessons here that can be learned regarding the job market in general as well.

Throughout your life and career, chances are you've met innumerable individuals who can assist you in your job search. Many of these people have job openings they can help you interview for, or know people who can assist you in [finding employment](#). Look at your life and the people you have known in the past. How many people have you lost track of? How many of those do you wish you would have kept in touch with? Imagine what a difference it would make if you could reactivate just 10 or 15 percent of your old professional contacts to come to your aid in your job search.

You certainly can find jobs by hanging out on a [job board](#) or contacting employers directly. You can also find jobs by doing a targeted mass-mailing to employers. And still, one of the best ways to find a job is by networking with people who already know you or you've known in the past. Re-establish as many connections as you can while you are conducting your job search. It can only help you.

Once you have identified those who may be able to assist you in your job search, I would recommend you very earnestly and deliberately re-establish contact with them. Send an email or place a call to them and reconnect, then simply update them on what you are doing. You do not need to tell these people you are looking for a job at the start of the conversation--it will come up as the conversation progresses. Most people are inclined to want to help, or at the very least, offer career advice.

Everyone wants acknowledgment and needs to be heard. Part of what you're doing when you contact people you've spoken with in the past is acknowledging them. If it's your fault you haven't spoken with them in a long time tell them so, and apologize. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose by contacting people from your past and enlisting them in your job search. Very often, you will find you need not even ask for help. Just letting people know you are searching is often enough. Once people realize you are available, you may find referrals come your way without even looking for them.

I am a major proponent of using every means necessary to [find a job](#). Our websites are a valuable tool for many job-seekers. In the end however, what it really comes down to when you want a job is people and relationships. People are the ones who give you jobs--not computers, not letters or email. Your contacts are one of your greatest assets.

Get people in your corner. Enlist everyone you can in your job search. Contact those you know from your past (professionally and personally) to chat about how they are doing. The reward for human interaction and putting yourself out there is you'll know the market better. And you may just find your dream job--all without the aid of any job search service. This is how people typically found employment in the past; now may be just the time to get back to this way of doing business.

LESSON

In this article Harrison discusses the importance of networking in a job search. While Harrison has advocated and worked on a varied range of job search tools, he is very clear that use of contacts in your job search continues to be your best bet. Once you've identified all your past contacts that can help you in your job search, start re-establishing contacts with them. Update them on your career without letting them know of your job search intentions. Once people find out that you are available, referrals come your way without even your asking for them. Connecting with people may get you your dream job

without using any job search service.

Read More About The People Who Leave Your Company Are Just as an Important Network as the People Currently at Your Company:

- [You Need Connections to Make the Most of Your Career](#)
- [Meg Whitmans Greatest Achievement, Networks and Your Career](#)
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