



## A Safety Valve for Mom's Rule

What's the purpose of all that effort? Apparently, it's to increase the odds that someone might tell you about an opening you haven't seen or recommend you for a job you're trying to land. The math makes sense but the strategy doesn't.

Why? Because it violates *Mom's Rule*. What was the first lesson your mother taught you? That's right. Don't speak to strangers. Or, to put it in workplace terms, don't risk your reputation or your own job security by vouching for someone you don't know.

Now, some will say that violates the Golden Rule, but it depends on which Golden Rule you mean. You see, there are actually two: one for everyday human interaction and one for the interactions that occur in the workplace.

· *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you* is a wonderful way to approach life. Its fundamental ethos is responsibility. We should hold ourselves to the same standards we apply to others.

· While responsibility is also important in the job market, however, the fundamental ethos in that venue is reciprocity. Hence the Golden Rule of Networking is to *give as good as you get*. In other words, if you want others to help you in your job search, you must first be helpful to them.

### Build Reciprocity in the Blink of an Eye

If networking is all about mutual support, there's more involved than simply making contact. You have to transform those contacts into relationships. Or to put it another way, networking isn't a contact sport, it's a team sport.

How do you establish those relationships? By investing the time and making the effort to share your knowledge, wisdom, information and ideas with peers, friends and colleagues. You look for ways to be of service to them so that they will be of service to you whenever you need it.

Developing such mutual support doesn't occur overnight, however, so it's best to get started before you find yourself in transition. That said, it is possible to generate at least some level of reciprocity in the blink of an eye, so you can rely on it during an active job search.

Here are a couple of ways to get started:

- Join the discussion forum on the Web-site of your professional society or trade association and take part regularly. (I recommend 3-4 times a week.) Look for ways to contribute to the conversation by providing information and insights that are helpful to the other participants.
- Identify the most popular peer blog or LinkedIn group in your field and replicate your behavior on the discussion forum. Brand yourself as someone who contributes regularly and for the good of others.

Make those investments of your time and talent for a couple of weeks, and you're likely to find at least some of your contacts have become relationships. And, relationships are the safety valve of Mom's Rule. They transform strangers into people you can count on.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

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