Every article and book related to doing a job search in a down economy emphasizes the need to be talking to people about what you are looking for, what you have to offer and where that fits best within an industry or company, who else you should speaking with to learn more about what is going on at this point in time and where current and future opportunities may be. In general, about 80% of all jobs are found through networking and in the current market, the percentage is probably even higher. So it is time to get out there and get started, or to increase your efforts if you already begun.

Networking is not asking someone for a job. Networking is cultivating relationships with individuals who can assist, guide and support you in your efforts to gain information, exposure and access. The more time and energy you invest in building and maintaining your network, the greater the returns will be.

Colgate alumni are consistently strong resources for students; information on what you need to do to receive alumni contacts in your target geographies, industries and organizations can be found under “Colgate Connection.” Our on-line handout “Building A Network” by alumna Regina Regazzi ’91 provides steps to growing the number and diversity of individuals in your network. Web-based platforms like FaceBook and LinkedIn allow you to identify and reach out to potential contacts, as do networks available through sites such as Going Global and Big Guide to Living and Working Overseas. And make sure to check out what networks your fraternity, sorority, athletic team, academic society or religious organization may have.

Additionally, many professional associations, organizations which represent an industry or career field, have individuals that you can contact for career exploration. Check the Encyclopedia of Associations in our library or Case Library, google, or visit the Spotlight on Careers and Ferguson's Facts on File sites to identify appropriate professional associations to target.

While best practices and how to's of networking are pointedly addressed in the Colgate Connection and Building a Network handouts, in, some are so vital to your success that they merit mentioning here as well. Top things to remember include:

Follow up on your initial outreach requesting a conversation. Telephoning in a week’s time is best. Alumni have counseled that students use the “three strikes” rule; that is, if after reaching out three times in a reasonable amount of time you have not yet connected, move on.

Follow through on the action steps recommended by your contact. Talk to the recommended individuals, read the suggested publications or articles, check out the websites or resources, sign up for daily alerts, complete the tutorial. Make sure to close the loop with the contact when you act on their advice.

Maintain your network by keeping it apprised of your progress and/or lack of it. The better informed your contacts are on where you are in your efforts, the better guidance they can provide you. While one-off conversations can offer you good information, on-going relationships yield more.

Recognize that everyone should be considered a networking contact. The best contacts are often “arm’s length”, people you already know, but do not overlook speaking with someone you sit next to on a plane, a faculty member, your friend’s sister’s boyfriend’s roommate, your high school teacher that you visit on break or whoever. You just don’t know who they might know!

For additional information on how to hone your networking skills or get out of a networking slump, schedule an appointment to meet with a Career Advisor by calling 315.228.7380.