

# PHONE NETWORKING

## *Smooth Sailing past the Secretary*

By Heather Lynn Fike  
R.L. Stevens & Associates

### **Fear of Phone Networking Founded on Distorted Perspectives**

Networking is the time-proven way a client can boost his Career Campaign activity and expedite a positive outcome. Phone Networking, Cold Calling, Warm Calling, whatever one chooses to call it – is usually a major part of the networking process; and the most dreaded.

What drives the fear of telephone networking is two-fold. There is that “potential” for personal rejection and the trepidation caused by erroneously believing that telephone networking is calling a company...a stranger, hat in hand, begging for a job.

One of the critical challenges in phone networking is getting past the gatekeeper; a struggle that both introverts *and* extroverts face with equal apprehension.

### **Introverts can't network over the phone, right? Wrong.**

Yes introverts can. My introverted clients do really well using the techniques I fine-tuned as a recruiter. Introverts and extroverts usually both need to set aside preparation time for phone networking *and* the interviewing process.

While introverts tend to ramble on and on due to their nervousness, extraverts tend to stumble in the area of written communications. Introverts generally excel in writing tasks. The good news is that as we get older, we naturally tend to develop and balance out our past weaknesses. Preparing yourself assures you that if you are an introvert, you can talk with the best of them!

Three practical tips to prepare yourself for phone networking:

1. Create a script or modify one you obtain from an outside source.
2. Practice with your career consultant and then practice with a loved one, friend or trusted colleague. Using a tape recorder is also very useful.
3. Practice as you make the calls you need to make! You will feel relieved it is not as hard as you might have anticipated!

### **It's harder to phone network as a recruiter than a job search**

For eight years I headed my own recruiting firm and when I had multiple client searches sometimes I made 50 calls a day. I have been yelled at, had people hang up on me and call me things I will not mention here.

Don't prematurely decide to swear off phone networking as a viable tool for locating key decision makers, leads to jobs or other vital information. Trust me, it was a lot harder as a recruiter to cold call people than you will ever face as a job searcher

You, on the other hand are not calling a company to ask if one of their employees might like to hear about a potentially better opportunity (as a recruiter would); you are calling to ask for expertise. **You are garnering expertise** – a phrase I like to use.

You are asking for information. And the higher up you go, historically the better it's going to go for you – once you get past the secretary because as a rule, leaders love to mentor. Ask any Executive VP or CEO and if they are noble leaders, they will generally tell you one of the most satisfying things about their career and experience would be the opportunity to help and mentor others.

But let's get back to that Secretary defending the seemingly impenetrable fortress...

**The Secretary: reckon with the force then create a diversion**

Contrary to what the secretary or administrative assistant would like you to believe, you can navigate to the king's courts and gain an audience. It's not easy, but you can do it and do it without fibbing. Take a look at these scripts:

<b>The SEC</b>	"Hello, Mr. Winn's office."
<b>YOU, the Fearless One</b>	"Hi! This is ___ from ___ may I speak to Mr. Winn please?"
<b>The SEC</b>	"Ummmm..... Can I tell him what it is regarding?"
<b>YOU, the Fearless One (though secretly sweating bullets)</b>	"Of course. It's regarding a project I am working on."
<b>The SEC (sharpening her sword for the pending territorial fight to the end)</b>	"Hmmmmm.... What KIND of project?"
<b>YOU, the Fearless One (fear now turns to non-verbalized annoyance, but you remain determined in getting those castle doors open immediately with no further delay)</b>	"A networking project..."

I have successfully used this tactic for eight years after trying dozens of other approaches and I am telling you, this one works 90% of the time. Most gatekeepers at this point will put you through to your targeted person. If you use the name of your company (if you are able to do so without jeopardizing your current job situation), and if you have an impressive title, this helps even more. He or she does not know who you are and she does not want to rub you the wrong way as her job security is at stake.

**The trade association angle that sails right past the secretary**

Let's say you are a really good client and you are working all the angles. Perhaps you are the VP of engineering for a company in California and you wish to relocate to Chicago. So you look up the chapter president of the Associated Engineers of Chicago and of course it is Mr. Winn. Or even if he was past president – he is affiliated. And that is our "In". So it would go something like this:

<b>The SEC</b>	"Can I tell him what this call is regarding?"
<b>YOU</b>	"Certainly. It's regarding the Associated Engineers." <i><b>You can even add....</b></i> "I understand he is President and I am contacting him regarding membership and my relocation to the Chicago Area."
<b>The SEC</b>	"Oh okay! Hold one moment please..."

**Real Compliments. Doors opened**

Scene changes: Mr. Winn is the President of an Architectural firm, and you saw an article on one of his high rise buildings in a magazine:

<b>The SEC</b>	"Can I tell him what this is regarding?"
<b>YOU</b>	"Yes – It's regarding The Monteaagle Towers Project."
<b>The SEC</b>	"What about it?" (Only a small minority will push the envelope like this)
<b>YOU</b>	"I am working on a project and I would like to talk to him about it."

Are you getting the picture? And to top it off, you can even parlay something you saw or read into a compliment to Mr. Winn once you are talking with him:

<b>YOU</b>	"And by the way Mr. Winn, I have not seen a more statuesque signature high rise in a lonnnnnggg time. Congratulations!"
<b>Mr. Winn</b>	(Gush Gush...)

But here is the rub. The compliment has to be humbly stated and real. We are not hocking wares (no offense please). Rather, we are inviting a co-communicative networking relationship. We must be real.

#### **If all else fails...punt**

"Okay, you might say," if 90% of the time I can get past the gatekeepers with your smooth sailing techniques, what about the remaining 10%? What if I can't get through?"

Well in these rare occasions we have to make the best of it. I am for punting. You can say the following:

<b>YOU</b> (said nicely)	"Does he have voice mail?" Or...I am sorry – it sounds like there is a problem. May I leave him a message on his voice mail at least?"
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#### **Don't look for a job while networking**

There are three statements that will guarantee telephone networking failure:

1. "I am calling because I would like to get Mr. Winn my resume."  
**(bye bye Mr. Winn – hello HR!)**
2. "I am calling because I am doing some networking on my career campaign."  
**(Hasta Lavista! Adios!)**
3. "I am calling because I would like to talk to Mr. Winn about employment."  
**(Abiento! Games Over- Thanks for playing!)**

The bottom line is – any forms of these; intimations you are calling relative to your career will equal more failed attempts than successes.

#### **Voice Mail can be effectively used to peak interest in you**

Knowing what to say in person to Mr. Winn is a whole other subject – thoughtfully written in the many career-oriented articles with scripts and all, which are easily accessed. But what about the Voice Mail Message? I like something like this:

"Hi Mr. Winn this is Hunter Smith from Ecco Development. It's Tuesday morning and I am calling because I am working on a project I would really like to garner your expertise on. I will be in the office all day today; my number is 212-555-1212. Thanks and I really look forward to speaking with you."
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It's not sneaky sounding like "Hi, this is Jack, my number is 212-555-1212." Click. And it's not too long. I never ever recommend leaving someone you don't know or barely know a long message. Maybe not even for people you do know!

I had a client who was a president of a large company. If I left him a message and got too wordy on his voice mail he would call me back and leave me a message saying "Hey – THANKS for your LOOONNNNGGG message!" **So exercise some caution here and you will do great.**

**The more calls you make, the more comfortable you will get**

Remember, that even if you stumble or mess up a call or two it is not a big deal. Just press forward.

One time, as a recruiter, I called a construction company. I was looking for a project manager and spoke to what I thought was a mid-level manager. He listened to my presentation about how good the position was and all about his competitor.

I finished and this gentleman who turned out to be the company's president said: "It sounds real good if I was 20 years younger and didn't happen to own this company!" To which I replied calmly: "Yes, but aren't you tired of all that pressure?" He laughed for a long time and we ended up talking further about the position and what I needed. He gave me several referrals and asked me to send my company information to him. I was able to U-turn a negative situation, and with practice, so can you.

**Best Wishes for Smooth Sailing.**

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*Heather Lynn Fike is employed by R.L. Stevens. She can be reached by email at [hfike@rlstevens.com](mailto:hfike@rlstevens.com).*