



Networking used to mean handing out business cards at Chamber of Commerce events. While those face-to-face meetings are still valuable in a job search, there are also some high-tech ways to meet people who might help you find a job.

Eric Goodwin, president of the recruiting firm Goodwin and Associates in Concord, N.H., says there is a place for networking in person, as long as it's done in a way that is genuine and authentic.

"The best relationships happen naturally and organically," he says. "There is always one person in the room who is busting out their business cards. I don't think that's appreciated by business people."

Goodwin says websites like LinkedIn.com are a great way to network. At LinkedIn, people sign up for free, then find a person they want to meet by connecting with friends and friends of friends who can eventually lead them to that contact.

There are also social sites such as Facebook and MySpace, in which people can meet online. He says Goodwin and Associates has partnered with Facebook to create a site where restaurant professionals can communicate with each other.

"Hospitality folks can share war stories, recommend books and wine, and exchange ideas," he says. "They can develop mentor relationships."

There are also newer online communities that are specifically for foodservice workers. Bite-Club.com offers posts that people can respond to and has a job board and events calendar. FohBoh.com is a site that offers chats, blogs and comments, so foodservice workers can offer their opinions about topics that range from food prices to charitable causes. There is also a job board.

"For people who have been downsized, I would get involved as quickly as I can with some of these online sites," Goodwin says. "Some jobs aren't posted, and some are becoming available shortly but are not currently public, so someone may know a friend who knows a friend."

As for old fashioned, in-person networking, there are opportunities in traditional and untraditional places. Suzi LeBlanc, director of human resources with Fifth Group Restaurants in Atlanta, says some people network everywhere,

from a bank line to the gym.

“For industry networking, I prefer wine tastings and wine-oriented events, which tend to bring out many of my peers,” she says. “I like the quarterly Midtown Alliance meetings to meet nonindustry folk.”

Check with your state restaurant association to see if it has local chapters for various cities or regions. Those smaller chapters often host mixers and luncheons. Some are open to nonmembers.

Finally, there is always temp work. Some hotels and restaurants hire contract workers or temporary employees to staff a banquet or other event. You might be able to meet industry people and make some money while pouring wine or helping to plate a thousand entrées.

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