

Take Your Search for a Job Offline

By [DENNIS NISHI](#)

When Jessica Rodrigues moved to New York after four years of doing AIDS health work in Mozambique, she mostly relied on the Internet to look for work.

She emailed her résumé in response to online job postings and waited. When that tack didn't net many offers, she sought help from New York career coach Melissa Llarena,

who told her to get more face to face with her search.



That included expanding her professional network and coming up with creative ways to get in front of the right people.

The first thing Ms. Rodrigues did was mention that she was looking for work to tango dance-class partners. One dancer, who was a board member for a

foundation, referred her to a part-time job doing biotechnology proposal research.

Ms. Rodrigues later reconnected with a former schoolmate who worked at New York University. She didn't want to show up just asking for help, so she offered to speak before students that had an interest in working abroad. The success of the event led to a regular speaking engagement at the university and gave her something that she could put on her résumé.

"I learned that it's all about relationship building, that exchange and being creative. And it helps when it's a more genuine connection as opposed to just networking, which has such a loaded connotation," says Ms. Rodrigues, who networked her way into a full-time job last year working on HIV programs for the United Nations.

While the Internet has made it easy to apply for work, career experts say that offline networking efforts to meet people and get introductions are a far more effective way to land jobs—especially since 80% of jobs aren't publicly advertised, says Steven Rothberg, founder of job-search website [CollegeRecruiter.com](#) in Minneapolis.

Online searches and research are better used to support offline networking.

Expand your network beyond industry peers. Anybody can offer potential leads, says Joel Garfinkle, an executive coach from San Francisco.

He recently told a client to share her job-search tales with other parents while picking up her children at day care. That led to an introduction by a parent who was the wife of a hiring manager at Yahoo. She got the job.

Attend professional trade association chapter meetings, conferences and trade shows. Beforehand, connect with the chapter president, who can introduce you to members.

Follow up by volunteering at association events or being on a committee. "All of these things take a lot of time, effort, energy so don't expect to just walk out with a job referral. You want to get to know people, become part of the organization, contribute," says Mr. Garfinkle. "If they like you and see you have credibility, they're going to want to help you."

Get somebody within the organization to hand deliver your résumé to the hiring manager. Even if you're not a precise match, you'll at least get an interview this way, says Ms. Llarena, who recommends using an alumni network or LinkedIn to drill through your web of connections to find somebody who works for the company you're interested in.

Once you get an introduction, take that relationship offline and meet him or her for coffee or set up an informational interview. The latter is an exploratory meeting or phone call where you can learn about a company or industry.

People are more likely to respond to a request for an informational interview since you're not there to ask for a job, says Ms. Llarena. "You're there to learn about the company and what kind of skills they're looking for but that connection could end up leading to a job. You'd want to maintain that connection with updates."

Always have your short pitch ready since you want to be able to confidently and knowledgeably respond to any potential employers. "That meeting can happen anywhere," says Mr. Garfinkle.

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