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## 8 Ways to Network During the Holidays to Find a Job

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Dawn Reiss

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The holidays bring plenty of parties, family gatherings and work functions. That makes the final weeks of the year the perfect time to network, especially if you are looking for a job.

Many people opt not to job hunt or network in December because they think no one hires at the end of the year. Not necessarily so, said **Mary Jeanne Vincent**, a career coach in Monterey, Calif. “It’s a

great time of year to network given the volume of events.”

Even if you are a champion networker, doing last minute networking at the end of the year will help you find a job come January. Here are a few simple tips:

Some job seekers are reluctant to talk about their job-loss situation, but they need to get over of the embarrassment (of not having a job) and talk to people,” Vincent said. If you’ve lost your job and aren’t sure how to tow the line between being realistic, but staying upbeat and positive, Vincent recommends a pre-set formula. These recommendations are good for anyone in the hunt for a new job.

### **1. Be Prepared**

Practice and prepare for questions like: “What do you do” or “How’s the job hunt going?” Respond with a statement that “hooks” or captures the attention of someone who is listening. “You know how difficult it is to implement new software?” Vincent said rhetorically. “What I do is help a company open the doors so everything goes smoothly. I’m looking for the right opportunity. I’m looking for a position in a large/small/medium sized company.” It’s about story telling so people don’t dart away and turn to someone else.

### **2. Talk to a Few**

Instead of trying to talk to everybody, have more in-depth conversations with a few people. Try and create meaningful connections where it is not just small talk. Think of it as building a relationship or meeting a friend rather than making a contact.



*Image credit: [Marco Bellucci](#),  
of Exhibition of Jean-Michel Folon. Forte Belvedere, Firenze.*

### **3. Ask Questions**

If you're at a cocktail party, ask other people about themselves. By getting other people to talk about themselves, you'll keep them engaged. Try starter questions like: What do you really like about your job? What's your favorite thing to do outside of work or best trip you've recently taken? Any question that can find common ground will help open the door to start a conversation. By focusing on the other person, you are more likely to look brilliant and interesting to them.

### **4. Write**

Craft a holiday networking letter. People expect to get something from us. Write a snail mail letter and include a piece of chocolate, like a Ghirardelli individually wrapped square of chocolate in a holiday flavor like limited edition **Peppermint Bark** or a **lottery** scratch off card. Or send an email. Either way write an update in your letter or email about what you are doing and keep it upbeat. Share recent accomplishments without being over the top and be sure to ask the recipient of the email or letter what they have been doing. For those out of work, Vincent suggests writing something like, "I spent 11 years with Intel and decided to look outside of the company because I'm looking to work for a smaller company."

## **5. Get Suggestions**

Don't ask for a job, ask for suggestions. It doesn't matter if this is during a conversation or over email, ask for suggestions of what companies you should look at, what people to talk to; if you're at a cocktail party this can open the door for a longer conversation. At the end of the conversation, ask if you can follow-up after the holidays for a one-on-one conversation. Say something like "I'd love to talk over coffee, would it be okay if I gave you a call and can we set up something up?" You don't want to monopolize anyone for too long and this gives you an opportunity to network with other people.

## **6. Great Business Cards**

This is a cardinal rule of networking. Make sure you have great business cards that look professional. They are your calling card to the world and a reflection of who you are. Make sure they are on professional grade paper, not punched out from some perforated form. On the back put highlights of your expertise, especially anything that will peak curiosity. On the back of Vincent's businesses cards she lists: five common career challenges I help job seekers solve.

## **7. Be Helpful**

Email a link to a business article or tech blog that a client or contact would find useful. Do this to follow-up a previous cocktail conversation or suggest a name of someone that might be a great contact. It's always better to give than receive. Plus, giving suggestions helps extend and continue the conversation while growing a new relationship.

## **8. Remember Others**

It's very competitive so you can't afford to just do what you've done in the past, Vincent said. It can be creative or be simple. Send out holiday greetings on Facebook. Invite friends and other associates to a seminar, free webcast, podcast or community event. Pick up the phone call and re-connect with clients and former and current colleagues. Send a gift to your top clients. It doesn't have to be expensive, just a thoughtful token of appreciation like movie tickets, coffee gift card or interesting book.

*[Dawn Reiss](#) is a Chicago-based journalist who has written about everything from eating crickets in Cambodia to the trial of former Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich.*