



Lamp Lighter

February 2009

Volume I Issue I

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Mission Statement

The ETP Monthly Newsletter, Lamp Lighter, is written by ETP member volunteers who are sharing their unique experiences and timely topics with the ETP membership.

Contact Information

Contact us with your comments and suggestions at lamplighter@etpnetwork.com

Contributing Volunteer Staff

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Feel free to volunteer and be part of our team just drop us an email at lamplighter@etpnetwork.com

Send your comments, ideas and questions to: lamplighter@etpnetwork.com
Feel free to volunteer - join the staff - send us your contact information at lamplighter@etpnetwork.com



Message from Rod Colon

It is with great joy and pride that I announce our inaugural ETP newsletter edition of the "Lamp Lighter." Thank you to Adele Ehlin and her staff of volunteers for providing a powerful resource in the true spirit of networking and career empowerment. The newsletter has been a dream of the ETP leadership team for some time and we are delighted to see its launch!

Godspeed Lamp Lighter as you help 1000s around the world in support of our ETP Network's Mission to: **Encourage, train, support, mentor and advise fellow CEOs of ME, Incorporated in all aspects of defined responsibilities to their Board of Directors.**

Calendar February & March 2009

Group Leaders feel free to contact us with your group's schedule at lamplighter@etpnetwork.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		Dinner Meeting for Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) - Contact: Scott@scott-chase.com	*Free Career Management Conference Call			
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	ETP Toolbar Overview Webinar 9PM seats are limited		2 Volunteers needed for TCI Career Fair at MADISON SQUARE GARDEN			
22	23	24	25	26	27	28



				Jersey Shore Networking Group "JSNG" lead by Tom Kenney in Toms River		ETP Network & Friends Dinner Dance
Mar 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Central NJ Networking Group @ Jewish Community Center, 1391 Martine Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ \$10 fee		ETP Networking Seminar for Military @ Fort Monmouth, NJ		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
					Women's Leadership Conference @ Georgian Court College, university Wellness Center, Lakewood NJ	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
				Charlotte ETP Networking Group @ Sugar Creek Branch Library 4045 N Tryon St, Charlotte, NC 28206, (704) 502-0312 Fee\$15 Platinum & \$10 Associates & guests		



Public Service Announcements

- 1. **Need Help with Your Natural Gas Bills from NJNG?** Programs are available for income-eligible households as well as families experiencing temporary difficulty due to loss of employment or illness. To learn if you qualify, contact the program directly at:

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) AND UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND (USF)

Middlesex County - Puerto Rican Action Board 732-828-4541
 Morris County - Organization for Hispanic Affairs, Inc. 973-366-1131
 Monmouth County - Check Mate Inc. 732-502-8855 or 732-775-4442
 Ocean County - Ocean, Inc. 732-244-9041

GIFT OF WARMTH FUND

Monmouth and Middlesex Counties – Check Mate Inc. 732-502-8855 or 732-775-4442
 Morris County - Organization for Hispanic Affairs, Inc. 973-366-1131
 Ocean County - Ocean, Inc. 732-244-9041

NJ SHARES

Call 1-866-657-4273 to find the agency in your area or visit <http://www.njshares.org>. Lifeline Credit Program 1-800-792-9745

- 2. **Monmouth County Library in Shrewsbury will be giving Free Tax Counseling** from Feb. 17 – Apr. 15, 2009 at 1001 Route 35, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702-4398; Hours: Mon. 9:15 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.; Tues., Wed., Thurs. 9:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Fri. & Sat. 9 a.m. - 12 noon

They request interested people bring :

- Last year's tax return
- If you paid college or university tuition in 2008 (including tuition amount and student interest paid)
- Social security numbers of all taxpayers and dependants
- If you spent money on child care (include name and tax ID of provider)
- Final brokerage statements
- If you are a teacher
- All W2's and 1099's showing income
- If you made alimony payments
- Homeowners, the amount of property tax paid and interest paid on mortgage and/or home equity loans
- If you purchased storm windows
- total medical expenses
- If you purchased a hybrid car
- If purchased a home after April 8, 2008

- 3. Walk with the Mitzvah Squad and ETP Network Members at the Multiple Sclerosis Fund Raiser on April 19, 2009 beginning at 8:00 AM at Nomahegan Park, Cranford, NJ. Contact Rod Colon at rod@etpnetwork.com for additional information.

Send your comments, ideas and questions to: lamplighter@etpnetwork.com
 Feel free to volunteer - join the staff - send us your contact information at lamplighter@etpnetwork.com



Ask Rod

Dear Rod,

Although the Client HR person, said he would see about getting me another interview and send me the tests I haven't heard back from him. I emailed him an after-interview-thank-you letter earlier in the day. Would you advise calling him on Monday?

Best wishes,
W

Dear W,

Key to closing any conversation is preparing for the follow up. When the HR person indicated they would get back to you say the following: "When can I expect to hear from you or someone in the organization?" They will than give you some type of time frame. You will than say: "Excellent, if I do not hear from you by (whenever day say they would) is it ok for me to call you the next day " This methodology helps you to have a clear follow up date if you do hear from them. What can you do now? Follow up with them 5 business days after your last conversation with an email and telephone call. Once you do this follow up each week - once per week. Always be positive in the call and email. You can find more information on this in Never Eat Alone - Keith Ferrazzi - chapter on Follow up or Fail.

Best wishes and keep networking alive,
Rod Colon
Founder & CEO
Empowering Today's Professionals Network (ETP Network)

Landing Zone

October 2008	Jennie Clavritinos+Louis Pandolfi+Ernie Pellegrino+Glenn Small+ Michael Canfora+Tom E. Kenny+ Barry Goldberg
November 2008	Joel Plaut
December 2008	Chuck Codling + Jennie Calavritinos+Tom Meola
January 2009	Edward Slabek + Manal Alimari +Mario Vaccari



ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Using the 7-Step ETP System

By Scott Chase, ETP Member

When I first was introduced to the new ETP 7-step job search system in December I was amazed at its simplicity. My first thought was “will these steps actually work”? Well, you will be amazed at the results that I have witnessed first hand.

Let's take a look at what each step of the system entails:

1. **IDENTIFY YOUR CORE SKILLS:** Seems easy enough to identify what your core skills are. Want to use about 3-5 skills. Mine are Project Management, Business Analyst, and Technical Analyst. What are yours?
2. **FIND WHAT THE MARKET DEMAND IS FOR YOUR CORE SKILLS:** The best way to gauge whether your core skills are in demand is to use the job site *INDEED*. In the search criteria enter one of your core skills, say, within a 25 mile radius of your home zip code. If your search returned 50 or more jobs, then you are golden. If not, try widening your search to 50, 75, 100 miles and see what the results are, of course, only enter the larger radius if you are willing to travel for your position. If you still don't get enough returning on your core skills search, then maybe we need to look at a different skill set or possibly different titles for your core skills.
3. **USING ONLINE AND NETWORKING RESOURCES, REVIEW JOB DESCRIPTIONS WITH THE EMPHASIS ON CORE REQUIREMENTS:** Plain and simple, use *INDEED* or other job search resources to find positions that match your core skills. You can also use your network to find any possible openings they might know about.
4. **FIND AND CALL ADVOCATES TO CLARIFY THE POSITION AND SELL IF APPROPRIATE:** Here comes the clear difference in what ETP is doing as compared to other job search approaches. Find someone you know (or in some cases you don't know) that can be an advocate for you within the company. This could be the HR recruiter for the position, someone in your network you know that works at the company, or, in my case, someone that you have something in common with. (*For example: LinkedIn group went to school together (alumni), etc...*) Your goal is to talk to someone to clarify the position.
5. **SUBMIT VALUE PROPOSITION (COVER LETTER, RESUME AND JOB DESCRIPTION) TO ADVOCATE:** Once you find an advocate, now it is really time to sell yourself. Submit your cover letter a (targeted!) resume and the job description to the advocate. Make sure to mention a good time to follow-up with the advocate.
6. **FOLLOW-UP WITH ADVOCATE:** Follow-up at the agreed upon time.
7. **Repeat.** Repeat this process until you have landed!

So there it is, in 7 steps; now let's take a look at my own personal example of how the system worked for me.

I found a position on INDEED I thought was a 95% fit for my experience and core skills in the HRIS analyst arena. (*Step 1, 2 and 3*) I then proceeded to *step 4*, to find an advocate to clarify the position. I looked for a recruiter at the company that might be in my network. I could not find one, so then I opened up my search on LinkedIn to include everyone in HR that worked at the company. I found a couple of matches, one, in particular, looked like he might be in the department in HR where the position might have resided. I clicked on the link in LinkedIn and found he was a level 3 connection, but, he was also part of the same project management group that I also belong to and

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he was accepting messages from the group. I then sent him a note via LinkedIn introducing myself and if he would be willing, based on my value proposition, to help me clarify the open HRIS Analyst position. After I sent the note via LinkedIn I continued to search for information about the company, including phone numbers for their main HQ office and looked in LinkedIn for more advocates.

Before I could continue my search for advocates an e-mail appears in my inbox. It is from the gentleman, whom I have not met before, about my LinkedIn request to clarify the position. He stated that if I sent him my value proposition, (Step 5) and, if it is as good as a match as I said it would be, he would be happy to personally walk my resume over to the recruiter for the position. I submitted my cover letter, targeted resume and job description to my new advocate, with the stipulation that if he thought I was not a good candidate for the position, I would not want him to submit my information to the recruiter. He reviewed the information and said I was a really good match and handed it to the recruiter.

I received a call for the recruiter to do a phone interview with him and then we set up a formal interview for the following week.

I then followed-up with my advocate to thank him and to keep him informed of my progress with the position. (Step 6)

The most amazing thing about my person example was the speed in which things took place. I saw the position at 8:00 AM, found and got response from advocate at 9:30 AM, got called and had phone interview with the recruiter by 10:30 AM!

Granted, the speed in which this took place was not typical. But, believe me when I say it, THE ETP 7 STEP SYSTEM WORKS!

The ETP Network Benefits

by: **Adelaida Rodriguez, ETP Member**

A pat on the shoulder...a virtual embrace...a warm blanket on a cold night...tireless, nurturing leaders...members always willing to lend a hand... For me, the ETP Network is all of these and so much more. Being a member of the ETP Network has given me the best opportunity to develop professional and social contacts, build relationships, and develop my career goals.

Before I joined the ETP Network, I spent hours doing dead-end research and sending resumes into the great "Black Hole." Networking is an important part of a successful job search and career management although it can be very challenging and difficult. The ETP Network has helped me explore many different career options. It has been especially beneficial for me in determining my strengths and weaknesses.

The Empowering Today's Professionals (ETP) Network is aptly named because its mission is to educate and empower professionals to manage their careers by adopting a CEO-like mind set in managing all aspects of their career management enterprise.

ETP leaders Rod Colon, Carl Reid, Chip Hartman, and Tom Kenny stress the importance of the "social interaction fundamentals" of trust, respect, reciprocity, and compassion. By now, most members realize that trust and reciprocity represent the "glue" that holds relationships together.



By taking advantage of and adopting what the ETP Network has to offer, I am both energized and amazed at the never-ending discoveries which reveal that I am truly a person of valuable character and great potential.

ETP Principles Increase My Business' Success

By Amanda Sherman, ETP Member

The benefits of being a small business owner are the way you are connected with your public. I am a wedding and special events coordinator I am able to be involve with many people on a daily bases. Whether it's a potential client or its vendors we make some sort of connection.

I didn't believe that being apart of a network would increase my power of gaining more support. My network is built on trust and family values first. I have learned to build solid, reliable business networks outside of my normal vendors. Through ETP I have develop strong, trusted relationships with fellow professionals and the power of social networking. I have learned that's its easy to cling to the safety of friends but sometimes you have to separate yourself from them and introduce yourself to new people.

Being able to network educates you about being aware of new opportunities. I have been brought face to face with people who can actually help me further my business. Through the principles of ETP Network I have been able to make new friends as well as talented business partners.

A network is an important part of growing your business if you are a business owner. With the benefit of being a member of ETP you are able to have lifelong friends and establish relationships on a first-name basis. I have been able to volunteer for many events which I learned to do through the ETP Network. I have been taught to get out and mingle this has help as my business continues to prosper.

It was difficult and physically painful for me to greet strangers because most of my business results in referrals so I am already prepared or I have spoken with clients. Being apart of ETP gives me the ambition to reach the next level of communication.

As long as you greet a person with a smile and a business card you will not be out of the loop. Through networking I learned it involves more than making conversation. It also extends to email and little notes.

Networking Rocks! One Member's Perspective

By Wendy Woolfork, ETP Member

There is no question that LinkedIn and Facebook have revolutionized networking. As a result of these media we all have easier access to professionals in our fields and to a variety of subject matter experts. And it is vitally important that we manage the wealth of potential relationships available to us through networking, while recognizing that being of service to others is an intrinsic component.

If we think of networks from an IT standpoint the idea of mutuality is immediately apparent. Computers are networked for quick and easy sharing of resources and information – and distinct protocols set the tone for successful communication, allowing machines to interface. The ones that



are not networked are referred to as standalone computers. From a human relations perspective this seems a rather solitary designation.

As we build and navigate Trusted Networks it is similarly worthwhile to be clear about some indispensable protocols by which to operate. Helpfulness, sincerity and reciprocity appear to jostle each other for supremacy. I joined ETP as a CEO member when I realized that the organization prides itself on providing value. At the core of its mission is an awareness of our interconnectedness.

Successful networking requires an attitude of giving advice and help while connecting with someone whose need we can identify with. As networkers we must come armed with enthusiasm. We just might reap rewards as contacts sell us to those who matter when we need it, down the road. Giving begets giving as the universe keeps score.

Networking the ETP way means we are interchangeably client and server. And like the client-server interaction in network computing, human networkers fulfill requests with the same zeal with which we advance them.

How I used my transition to modify my focus

By Joe Auerbach, ETP Member

While I (and my 'Board of Directors') remain fully aware of the importance of finding my next position, I've also used this time of transition to spend time doing other important things as well. While my situation may not be the same as everyone else, in that during 26 years at my last position I accumulated a decent severance as well as a modest pension along with the grey hairs I've mentioned on a couple of the Wednesday night calls, I'd like to suggest that there may be some solace in stepping back now and then from the full-time task of finding your 'next career challenge' and spending a little time on something else that you may find rewarding.

Have you considered lending your expertise to a community organization? For many years I've worked with a local rescue squad, and had time recently to revamp and upgrade the computer system that I had originally installed a few years ago. We use this for training, record keeping and other tasks, as well as supporting internet connections for our members to use during 'down time'. By contacting suppliers and vendors, as well as using a little of our own funds, we now have a robust Win 2008 domain.

As for other community groups, have you considered volunteer tutoring? There are many groups looking for experienced people to show that they care enough to give some time to help kids with schoolwork or just lending a 'shoulder' or 'ear' for discussions. In some cases this help can even be done online.

Finally, have you considered teaching as a part-time (or maybe even full-time) career? In the past, I had taught a weekly 3-hour course at a local college, and have since added another class to fill in some of the available time that I have. It's not for everyone, but the satisfaction of seeing 'the light bulb go on' as a student understands a topic is certainly rewarding in its own way. There are many institutions that need the expertise that's so often shown during the call-ins, and the opportunity to transmit that to others is something to consider.



Coping With Transition

By Adele Simon-Ehlin, ETP Member

Having been an active career woman, transition became a very trying time. Like most seasoned professionals I measured my value directly to the size of my paycheck. Then the lights went out, I needed to decide if I was going to hide in the proverbial corner and lick my wounds or I would rise above my hurt feelings and self perceived negative worth. But, what do you do? I went through the procedure of signing up for unemployment benefits and decided to focus my attention on the job search in as organized a way as I had lead my professional life. I armed my arsenal. First I made up my business cards, not cute ones, professional cards. I learned about networking through the New Jersey Department of Labor Program. I joined the PSG (Professional Services Group) at the Neptune office which is how I hooked up with Rod Colon and ETP. I learned about resumes and covering letters. I learned about the "T" letter and the proposal. I developed an elevator speech and polished my presentation. I practiced until I was blue in the face and then practiced some more. With Rod's help, I learned how to network and how to rebuild my shattered network which while difficult was neither painful nor embarrassing. I pulled out my old rolodex and began in earnest. We all do it, some better than others. Me, I'm in the middle of the pack, for now.

I keep in touch with my network, family and growing circle of friends. We call each other, we meet, we laugh, we send out birthday cards and we hold each other up on the bad days and celebrate the good days. The story does not end here, it begins here.

This was all well and good but not enough for me. I needed to know I was still valuable to society even though I was in transition. I needed another way to evaluate my worth to society and family. I reached out to friends who had been in this position and listened carefully to what they did and are still doing to maintain an active and fulfilling life as they simultaneously work to re-enter the work force. I listened and learned from their suggestions, comments and especially the mistakes they made. I began by volunteering to do charity work at a specific charity affiliated with a major cancer center in New York City. I use my skills to help raise much needed funds to help children afflicted with cancer. I have met new people who have opened my eyes to a side of life I never thought about before. While my charitable work has had a profoundly positive effect on my outlook on life, I still needed more. I became active politically at the local level, it got me involved, out of the house, interested in my community and I met people who have become invaluable resources and references. I became active in the ETP Network by writing the personal finance column. It gives me a reason to contact my professional friends both in and out of my linked in network. It gives me a reason to make new professional acquaintances.

At this point I started feeling I was succeeding; I look to add additional projects as time and other issues allow. So, I am fully occupied and committed; I am able to put aside the negative thoughts of valueless self worth. I am living during transition by having worked my way up the ladder to a position of positive thinking and strength. Also, I can now add other skills and meaningful activities to my resume.

How I Stay in Touch with my Contacts

By Jerrold (Jerry) Clifford, ETP Member



I am not a hermit! Of course, there are times I wish I were. Much of the day I am on the phone either for my job, or in transition, trying to find a position. Talking on the phone (or using email) means talking/communicating with people. Who wants to talk/communicate with people after a hard day talking on the phone? When I have free time that is the last thing I want to do.

That is why I found I was neglecting to speak to people on my contact list. Not a problem I told myself. Working or not, I had no boss to tell me to contact people on my own time, no forced incentive. But one day I noticed the contacts button on my mail browser and realized I hadn't contacted any folks in a while. Not contacting people had become a bad habit, a practice that had to change if I wanted to renew my relationships. From that point on I made it a point to contact someone almost every day. Here is how:

First make a list. It doesn't matter if you know someone for a while. If the name is only in your head you are relying on memory to contact. You may not remember important information (kids names, birthday, spouse's name.) I always write it down.

You can't call a contact if you have no one to call. It sounds stupid and obvious, but you would be surprised at how many times people tell me they don't know anyone. If you are working you know co-workers. If you are in transition, you worked with people. Put them on your list, especially if you worked well together. Before I left my last job I made a point of gathering the contact information of those with whom I worked closely. I created a contact book including name, position, business contact number, email, home phone or cell number and any personal points (interests, peeves, etc) -- If I knew additional information I would jot it down. Whenever I get a chance (or at least twice/week) I contact someone. My preference is to speak personally, rather than via email—it is much more personal. Email is fine, especially for those I don't know well. Since we all tend to get tons of emails a voice call makes a more vivid impression and allows me to act on what I call "verbal body language". If I had a working professional or friendship relationship, personal or phone contact is better.

And while you are at it, don't forget your non-work contacts. If you are at a networking meeting (actually, any meeting can be a networking meeting, but that is the subject of another article) you want to exchange business cards. Note where and when you met them on the cards and put the contacts on your list.

Schedule your time. We are all guilty of being "too busy" to make a contact call. For some reason we view making calls as scary or not fun. Our minds treat them as something to be feared and we don't do it. The best way to overcome fear is by action. The best way to generate this action is to make a decision on how much time you want to spend contacting people. Then simply reserve this time by marking in it your calendar.

Make it a point to attend networking meetings. This is an important way to obtain fresh contacts, and since you are meeting people in person, networking events are a great way to establish relationships—the best kind of contact. If you have never attended one I suggest one of the ETP networking meetings—They are friendly, results oriented and convenient. I get to chat with people and learn their interests, job experience, and what they are looking for. I use the information on their business cards to contact them, again via phone if possible. If not, I use email, starting with something like "hi, I'm Jerry Clifford. We met at the ETP meeting last Tuesday."....This reinforces their memory and the relationship you already started at the meeting.



Don't forget the ETP Wednesday call—great way to meet new folks from across the country. I attend every week. I always learn something new about job searching and career building and previously acquired knowledge is reinforced. I have determined contacts and built relationships based on the call. Chatting with folks every week automatically keeps the contacts “fresh”...and I am keeping in touch with some of my contacts automatically!

Follow up with your network tool contacts. Sites such as LinkedIn help establish networks of contacts—folks you know and others who know them. If the networks are large it may not be practical to contact everyone personally. It's kind of like the old question, how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time; I try to contact the people I know as I get a chance. Scheduling the calls in my calendar assures that it will get done.

Postcards are not exactly high tech in the electronic gadget age but very effective and especially convenient when I am on the go. Whenever I travel outside my home geographic area I invest in a few post cards showing the local sights. I send them to some of the contacts I worked with in the past year but whom I haven't spoken to in a while.

I found that after a while contacting can be fun. It is an important tool in your job finding, career building toolbox. Whether you utilize these tips or not, remember a tool serves no purpose unless it is used. Use it and enjoy the benefits of what you build.

ETP Network Brings Me Full Circle

By James Yoakum, ETP Member

They say one of the greatest stresses in life is losing your job. I agree! But perhaps more stressful than losing your job is getting a job; especially for someone who has not had to search for a new job for over 25 years.

The last time I looked for a job, I was a newly graduated attorney. To find my first “real” fulltime position:

- 1) I established a network of colleagues, family and friends;
- 2) I flooded the market with paper resumes; and
- 3) I utilized the job board at my law school.

After some trepidation, I did get two job offers. One was secured via a contact – my grandfather's barber whose brother was a lawyer. The second was via a job board posting. But even that offer came because of previous internship experience in the same legal specialty (state and local taxation). And guess what, that internship was secured through a contact my father had with the Ohio Department of Taxation. Oh, the power of networking!

The only time I have changed jobs (I have only worked for two companies over my 28 year career), I was recruited.

So back last year when I began my job search for a senior management/executive position in the risk management, legal, compliance realms, you can imagine my dismay with the new process I initially found. Technology and the art of the virtual resumes submitted at the touch of a key were all new to me. The old art of utilizing your network of contacts, talking by phone or face-to-face, and following up with paper resumes seemed to be replaced by the personal computer.



Well thanks to the ETP Network I soon learned that networking still existed and remained a critical element of the job search process. Connections and contacts are still the meat and potatoes of job searching. Granted you do have to master and utilize technology's new features. After all, much of today's networking begins with technology (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook). But that is only the start. ETP Network offered me the source to utilize these virtual contacts to create a network of truly real people. ETP's unique Wednesday networking calls provided me the opportunity to actually speak to people. ETP's networking events afforded opportunities to meet people face-to-face. This all lead to opportunities to pick up the phone and call members of the ETP Network for advice, assistance and support.

So while I began my job search last fall somewhat bewildered, the ETP Network provided me with essential tools to network, critical to the job search process. Thanks ETP! I know now that despite all the change and new technology, the old school philosophy of networking, networking, networking is how most find their next job.

And while I am still waiting for that next job, the ETP Network is helping me to understand and get through it all with more support. The ETP Network Yahoo Group is a daily source for me for job postings, educational pieces and opportunities, networking events, etc. These means are all part of my job search which I am sure will end successfully, that is me on a new job.

Shyly Working the Room

By Adele Simon-Ehlin, ETP Member

Yes, I am shy and going into a room filled mainly with strangers is not my favorite experience. Through trial and error and with the help of the ETP principles I have found a way to improve how I work the room in a business and/or social setting with less personal stress and significantly improved results.

Some of us are shy all of the time; some of us are shy some of the time. Me, I do not like to go somewhere where I do not know anyone. And, then it all changed for the better as I adopted the ETP program to fit into these circumstances.

As we know the key to success in the ETP program is following and accomplishing the 5 goals which are:

- 1) securing the ideal job/business,
- 2) developing a career backup plan,
- 3) develop a trusted personal network
- 4) develop multiple sources of income
- 5) become a network leader

We know when we are in the process of securing the ideal job or business we need to do our research. So, when I accept an invitation to a social or business gathering where I know very few if any people, I do my research about the group, its goals and its key members. I check my network (both on and off linked in and face book) and see if I have a friend or associate in common with the group and its members. If, I do I reach out to my "person" who will make an introduction to their "person" once the initial contact is made. Then it's a quick note or email about hoping to see you and spend some time with you at this upcoming event. I thank my contact at this point (email and regular mail with a thank you note) and again after the event. At least now I will have one or more people to greet who are hopefully insiders in the group and can smooth my way. If, they are insiders, then they will make one or two more introductions and it will go on from that point.

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Before I leave for the event, I put my business cards in an easily accessible pocket of the outfit I wear that day. So, no fumbling; I can offer my card with its contact information in a relaxed and easy manner and not fumble around for my cards making me feel more ill at ease. In another pocket I place all of the cards I collect. I write memory jogging notes on the back of these “new” cards

If, I strike out and cannot find a connector, I research the group further so I can have an intelligent conversation with someone in the group about its aims and goals and how I fit into the group. This is my back-up plan which may become my primary plan. So, I need to be comfortable with what I will be saying. I practice.

As I go around from congregated group to group I continue meeting new people and listen to their conversations. I try to add something meaningful when appropriate or otherwise I agree with the speaker. Most importantly, I try to find something nice to say to that person such as, “you took the words right out of my mouth; you have eloquently expressed my exact sentiments.” I find their reply opens the door so I can add “I would love to work on this (follow up or whatever is appropriate) with you; here is my card; how can I contact you and when will it be convenient for you?”

The minute I get home and before I unwind from the gathering, I send an email or telephone call to the people I have met. I thank them for extending their hospitality to me and then follow-up with whatever needs to be sent to them. Then, I re-thank my connector for the contact.

The process does not stop here. I now need to build a relationship with these new contacts. Will the relationship grow into a new friendship and will I add some new member(s) of my network? More often than not the relationship will, if we both nurture it. Building a strong network, like good friendships needs to be worked on. I need to stay in contact with the person just as they need to stay in contact with me. If they or I decide not to take the relationship further, so be it. It is not personal.