

Looking for a Good Job in Latin America? Try Networking

By PATRICIA CANEPA
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If you're looking for a job in Latin America, and you are sending marketing letters, responding to newspaper ads, or posting your resume on the internet, you're probably not handling your search the most efficient way. While these are valid search methods, networking is by far the most effective method for executive placement in Latin America.

According to a global 2003 DBM study among 64,000 outplaced executives who transitioned into new jobs last year, 83% of executives in Latin America landed a new job thanks to networking. This is significantly above the world-wide average of 53%.

There are a number of reasons that may account for this. One is the smaller size of executive circles in Latin America, where "hidden" positions are found. Then, there is the "who you know" unspoken concept, highly-valued in our close-knit societies. Finally, many companies in Latin America may not have the resources to hire head hunters for their search, or place attractive ads in the Sunday paper.

Given the importance of networking in Latin America, following are some tips to help make your networking and job search more successful:

Think of yourself as your very own Commercial Manager.

Your product (composed of your skills, abilities, experience and competitive advantages) must be sold to a company. If you think of yourself as the commercial manager of this product, then it follows that you must first know your product and its competitive advantages perfectly well. Then, you must build the channels to get your product visibly on the shelf, promote it and sell it. This is what networking is all about.

Think of networking as a strategic tool.

Networking is not just about handing out business cards, or attending cocktail parties. It is the focused, strategic management of your contacts to convert them into your spokespersons. You must ensure target contacts know who you are and where your interests, experience and competitive advantages lie. This will enable them to suggest your name when "hidden" positions spring up.

Be persistent.

It is wise to remember that on average, it takes at least six calls for a sales person to get an appointment. Do not be discouraged, and do not leave messages. It is better to wait and establish direct contact. Voice mail may not be as common in Latin America, so be sure to learn the secretary's name and use it

the next time you call for a more personal approach.

Do not underestimate contacts.

Sometimes targeting the highest ranked executives will make networking more difficult, as their agendas tend to be full or booked well in advance. An



assistant or secretary often has inside knowledge that can help get your foot in the door. Likewise, your barber or hairdresser may just know the person you're trying to reach. The message here is: Think big. Everyone can be a potential contact.

Pace yourself.

It is wise to first practice your approach with people you know well. They can provide valuable feedback and help you gain confidence. Then, you can

try primary contacts, or people you know directly. It is best to work your way up to your secondary contacts or referrals before trying cold calls.

Be enthusiastic.

Do not forget to be friendly and professional when you call. Mention the person who referred you. Be direct in terms of why you want to meet, and mention you will only take 20 minutes of their time. This improves your chance of success.

Make the most of your appointments.

Most people won't have a job waiting for you. So, be sure to use your time wisely. Establish your meeting objectives beforehand. Define the type of information you hope to get out of the meeting, such as information on the sector, challenges the company is facing, feedback on a particular idea, or referrals. Above all, be sure they know all about your experience and competitive advantages before you walk out the door.

Limit the length of your visits.

Busy people making a space in their agendas for you will not appreciate delays. Better to be on time than late. And in Latin American countries, you'd better be prepared to wait patiently for delays. Limit your calls to no more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Thank them for their time, and leave.

Be thankful.

Even if thank you notes are not common practice in Latin America, they will help you stand out from the crowd. And, among etiquette conscious executives, they will strike a chord, particularly if written in fine paper.

Even the most seasoned executives often find networking hard to do. If you find it difficult to talk about yourself or your accomplishments, don't forget that you are actually providing information that could eventually help the person you are talking to, and you are gaining valuable information in the process. The more you practice, the easier it becomes.

Remember, each appointment has the potential to become an interview so wear your best suit—you will never go wrong with grey or dark blue and black polished shoes. If you are a male, don't forget the tie, a clean tie. Avoid strong perfumes or cigarettes before the interview, check for trim and clean nails, a good haircut, and you're set. Good luck!

Patricia Canepa is an alumna ('84) who is currently the Consultant and Marketing Director of DBM, a global human resources consulting firm.

Map Source: Sensen, Mark. Boundaries' data by Guiseppe Bottasini. "FOTW South America map." 03-01-03. [FOTW Flags Of The World website](http://www.flagspot.net/flags/) Based on material from Virtual Tourist. Internet. 9 April 2004. <http://flagspot.net/flags/>

Thunderbird Global Reunion in Shanghai

Thunderbird Global Reunion is back! The first Thunderbird Global Reunion (TGR) took place in Dubai in 2002. It actually started as a European reunion (planned by the Europe-Middle East and Africa Thunderbird Alumni Association) and eventually evolved into a global reunion as the planners (Salman Chaudhry '88 & Hilmi Ghosheh '99) developed their agenda and marketing strategy.

The event was a big success, attracting 150 T-birds from all over the world including: Belgium, Canada, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Italy, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, U.S., U.K., and UAE.

The success of the Dubai reunion prompted Thunderbird to continue holding Global Reunions every other year, alternating them with homecoming. In Global Reunion years, an "Alumni Weekend" is also held to honor and bring together the 10, 25 and 50 year reunion classes.

The school considered several possible sites for TGR 2004 based on suggestions from alumni including places such as Rio, Phuket (Thailand) and Shanghai. The decision to select

Shanghai was based on the strong interest in China from a business and cultural perspective and the school's strategic focus on China. The location also provided opportunities for business, social and cultural activities for the attendees, while allowing Thunderbird to showcase its China hub.

The theme for the event, which takes place Oct 15-18, is "How to start or expand your business in China" with a heavy emphasis on the business component. There will be two full days of business conferences and seminars. However, we will also focus on the social aspect that is the spirit of T-birds.

There will be plenty of opportunities for networking, visiting with old friends, and lots of eating and drinking! TGR Shanghai 2004 is very affordable, even fresh grads and current students can afford to attend (US\$500 for full business track, US\$300 for social track). There are also plenty of cultural tours for those who want to tour in and around Shanghai.

Thanks to Linda Suen of TAA Shanghai Chapter and Anne-Marie Nelson for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

Interested in attending?

Why should students and alumni attend TGR Shanghai 2004?

Here are the top 5 reasons:

5. Learn to start or expand your business from successful business leaders
4. Look for clients, suppliers or business partners from all over the world and in China
3. Renew ties with fellow alumni while experiencing Shanghai
2. Give back to Thunderbird: all net proceeds will go to alumni scholarships and charity
1. Meet our new president, and hear about the vision for Thunderbird under his leadership

Registration for the event is available on line at: www.my-tgr.com! Registering qualifies you for entry into drawings for prizes such as hotel rooms at the Portman Ritz-Carlton Shanghai, airline tickets and mobile phones. TGR 2004 is hosted by the Thunderbird Alumni Association (TAA) Shanghai Chapter, in cooperation with TAA Hong Kong & Beijing Chapters and Thunderbird Asia Pacific Council.

For information please email: info@my-tgr.com.

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