

2013 Guide for New NP & PA Graduates



► Take networking to a new level at the NP & PA Student & New Grad Center. Find articles relevant to student life, blogs by NP and PA students, and job listings to help you land your first job.

TOM WHELEN

Inside this exclusive guide from *ADVANCE for NPs & PAs*, you'll find advice on preparing your resume, networking for jobs, interviewing in tech style and determining your first salary range.

Salary Tips for the New Grad

How much should you expect, and when should you ask?

By Renee Dahring, MSN, NP

► **"MONEY IS A HORRID** thing to follow, but a charming thing to meet." Author Henry James wrote these words more than a century ago. And today, more than 100 years later, money remains an uncomfortable subject.

No one likes to talk about money, but everyone wants to be paid. And soon-to-be graduating NPs and PAs worry a lot about what they can expect to be paid. When I talk

with new grads they tell me their concerns fall into two categories: How much should I expect to be paid? and When do I ask?

Do Your Homework

Before you submit your first application, you need to do your homework. As with anything else, knowledge is the key. Because you are entering a new profession, along with your new role comes a new set of considerations

to factor into calculating your compensation. Start your market research by looking at every job posting you can find. Talk to a few recruiters. Base your salary expectations on the average. Just be sure you are looking at true comps — in other words, you must compare similar positions, geographic areas and years of experience. The pay in southern California is irrelevant if you are looking for job in rural Iowa.

Keep it real. I don't care what you did before you ►►

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went to school, when it comes to your first PA or NP job you have ZERO years of experience. Employers put a great deal of time, energy and research into establishing their pay scales.

An employer's pay scale reflects not only years of service but also years of experience. This is the very same scale that establishes the pay for all your NP and PA colleagues who work there as well. This ensures that everyone is playing by the same rules. In other words,

Before you submit your first application, you need to do your homework. As with anything else, knowledge is the key.

the pay is what it is and they aren't going to change it for you. It's highly unlikely that an employer is going to offer you, as a new graduate, the same rate as the experienced clinician. Do the math: If they are going to pay you for experience then they will expect you to have experience. And yes, I (and employers) am aware that new NPs rarely make more than they were making as nurses. Sorry.

Don't get too hung up on hourly rates when you evaluate compensation. Understand how an employer sees their offer. At this professional level, employers tend to evaluate compensation in terms of the value of the whole package (vacation, 401k, CME and health ben-

efits). Many employers tell me that while they are unable to offer a new grad a higher salary, they do have the ability to be much more flexible when it comes to increasing some of the other components of the compensation package. A wise new grad will negotiate additional vacation time or more CME to make up the difference.

Acquaint yourself with other pay structures. "Production" may be offered as part of your package, and it is to your advantage to understand how this pay model works so you can decide if it is the right fit for you as a new grad. Production pay can effectively level the salary field for those of you who feel you have the ability to get up to speed quickly on your first job.

The Right Time

Know your etiquette and mind your manners. There is proper time and place to discuss money, and that proper time and place is not during an interview. Most employers will post the salary range either on their website or in the ad for the job, so you ought to know the basic salary range before you ever submit an application. If not, it is certainly OK to inquire (emphasis on the word "inquire") before you apply. However, and this is crucial, if the salary or benefits are not what you had hoped, under NO circumstances should you begin to discuss the possibility of receiving more. This is called negotiating and one does not negotiate for something one does not yet have. An interview is not a job offer and until you have received an offer, you should not be negotiating. ▶▶



I can hear you thinking “but what if their pay range is below what I feel I am worth”? I can tell you from experience that the vast majority of employers are offering fair salaries. I will kindly refer you back to the beginning of this article where I talk about doing your homework and keeping it real. This doesn’t mean that you won’t occasionally run across an employer who is offering a rate of pay that is severely below market. If that is the case, I recommend you don’t apply. Employers do occasionally reconsider their wage range but I have yet to see it happen based on the recommendations of a new graduate! Leave compensation counseling to folks like myself who have the stats and credentials to offer such advice.

And by the way, not every offer demands an aggressive counteroffer. When comparing the offered salary to your desired salary, convert the difference into a percentage. Unfortunately I can’t tell you a magic percentage to counter but I can tell you that if you are demanding 5% to 10% more than the employer is offering, the odds are against you. Does it seem logical to you that an employer would get into a bidding war with a new grad when seasoned clinicians have also applied for the same position? ■



Building a Better Resume

Make sure to capitalize on all resources

By Greg Thompson

► **HIRING MANAGERS** at large hospitals typically use search applicant tracking systems, and according to Marie Zimenoff, these programs sift through electronically submitted resumes to select ones with the highest key word

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matches based on job description and/or specific skills.

“The hiring person may only look at the ones the computer said are a match,” said Zimenoff, president of the National Resume Writers Association. “Look at that job description, and change words on your resume to use their language. If you don’t, you may not ever get looked at by a human.”

According to Laura Smith-Proulx, a resume writer at An Expert Resume, those same keywords should be lurking on a LinkedIn profile. “Most employers might only hear about you from your LinkedIn profile, then ask for your resume,” she said. “If you don’t have enough good ►►

keyword and achievement content on a LinkedIn profile, it's going to be more difficult to be discovered."

Smith-Proulx advised that all social media, not just LinkedIn, should be in alignment with the image job seekers wish to project. For example, if you supposedly embody a commitment to confidentiality and patient quality, but have a "very open Facebook profile that mentions work or shows lack of discretion," employers

Even in an online world, there is still a time and place for an eye-catching paper resume. This is particularly true if you know the hiring manager.

will find it, and it could influence hiring decisions.

Some recruiters recruit from Facebook, but LinkedIn is the dominant site for showcasing job qualifications. As for actively posting resumes on sites such as Monster.com, Smith-Proulx said the practice has waned in recent years.

"Independent recruiters won't touch a posted resume," she said. "So if you're trying to work in a leadership role, don't post it on any website. However, your chances of being recruited on LinkedIn are higher than being recruited from a job board."

Beyond the Keywords

Once job seekers get by the tracking systems, managers will inevitably focus on substantive accomplishments. Smith-Proulx encourages applicants to list these on a

resume with a results-oriented approach designed to stand out from the competition.

"Most people write a resume thinking of what they offer and not thinking of their competition, and that is the biggest error," she said. "They're expecting someone to read between the lines, figure out what they're qualified for, figure out how they can be useful."

Is Paper Obsolete?

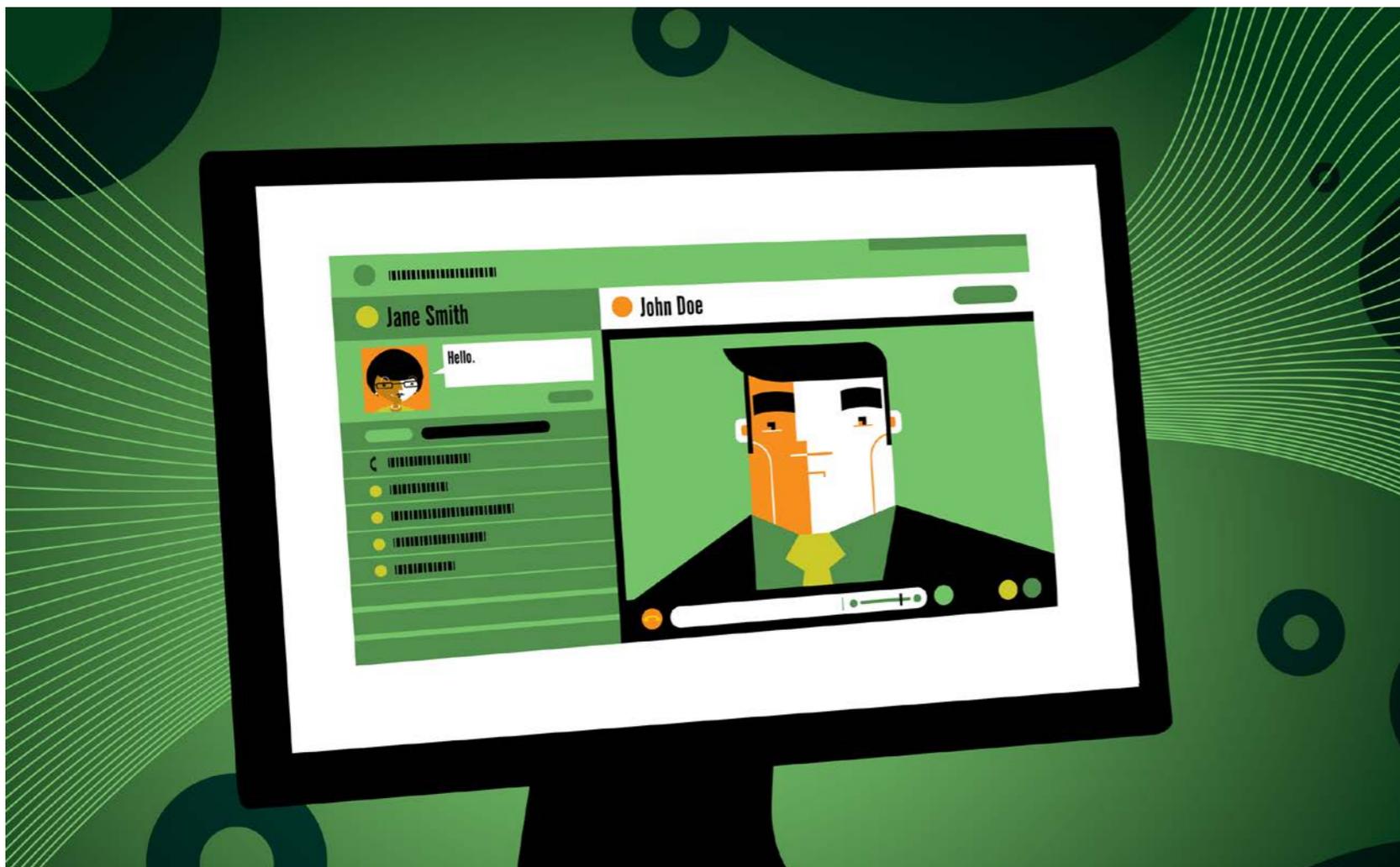
Even in an online world, there is still a time and place for an eye-catching paper resume. Specifically after applying online, Zimenoff encourages clients to send a hard copy as a follow-up.

"Especially if you know the actual hiring manager, it can help you stand out to send a large manila folder with a pretty resume in it," said Zimenoff. "A hard copy is also used in networking, and meeting people face to face is a good thing to be doing."

Smith-Proulx recommends bringing a hard copy to an interview to ensure the company has a great looking copy. "Often, they may print an unattractive copy off their email," Smith-Proulx said. "If you believe you are in a large number of applicants and you're trying to make an impression after applying online, it can even sometimes make sense to snail mail a resume."

It's ok to use an attractive paper stock, but avoid too much color. "And don't use an odd color," Smith-Proulx said. "Adding color to a border or a headline can be striking if it is used sparingly and tuned to what your audience prefers."

A cover letter is expected, and Zimenoff said studies show 89% of hiring managers believe it to be important. However, only a third actually read it. "The cover letters usually aren't read until after they've eliminated the people who aren't qualified," Zimenoff said. ■



TOM WHALEN

Get Psyched to Skype

Job interviews via videoconferencing are gaining favor with employers

By Valerie Neff Newitt

▶ **IT'S NOT ALWAYS A CASE** of “going to an interview.” Sometimes the interview comes to you instead.

“Medical professionals seeking jobs should prepare

for new-wave interviewing via Skype,” said Joanna Kires, the director of allied health permanent placement at CompHealth, a national healthcare staffing and placement company. “We make quite a few permanent placements in which the candidates have never flown out to see the sites.”

While employers were once resistant to virtual interviews, “... now they find it a great tool and a huge cost savings for both the hospital and the job seeker in terms

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Avoid fluorescent light; natural light is best but incandescent is also acceptable. Be sure you are not in front of a window, which will cause you to appear in silhouette.

of transportation costs, time and human wear-and-tear,” Kires explained.

Adam Higman, a national healthcare operations consultant, said that while Skype probably will not replace all in-person interviews, it is “another screening tool before a facility flies a candidate in or schedules a full day of interviews.” In other words, you may have to ace a Skypeview before getting an on-site opportunity.

Wondering how to do that? ADVANCE asked a cadre of healthcare, recruitment, communications and career professionals for tips on nailing a Skype interview:

Getting Started

- **Use a professional Skype account name,** suggested CompHealth’s “A Candidate’s Guide to Skype.” A name like “chickwithanattitude” will not help you get a job. Also be sure to upload a good professional photo to your Skype account.
- **Find the right environment.** Avoid fluorescent light; natural light is best but incandescent is also acceptable. Be sure you are not in front of a window, which will cause you to appear in silhouette. Make sure your background is ▶▶

appropriate — don't sit in the bedroom, in front of a distracting mirror, or in view of a refrigerator with children's artwork. Opt instead for a bookshelf, but make sure book titles are not provocative. ("You don't need to give an interviewer cause to dismiss you because of a library with extreme political or pornographic fare," noted Suzanne Garber, chief networking officer for International SOS.) Consider adding a potted plant, and a certificate discreetly placed (keep it subtle). Do not settle for a blank wall – too dull and sterile.

Days Before the Interview

- **Test everything,** advised Josh Williams, a marketing professional who relocated to Philadelphia after being hired through a Skype interview. "Make sure the video, audio and internet connection are working properly," he advised. And be sure you have consistent connectivity (... is your WiFi failsafe? If not, go wired).
- **Position the camera** so that it is looking down on you, said Keith Yaskin, former TV reporter and current media company owner. "A camera even slightly looking up will exaggerate a double chin — not flattering."
- **Angle your seat.** "TV veterans use this trick to

avoid the 'mug shot look' and give their faces dimensionality," CompHealth advises. "Turn your torso slightly ... your belt buckle should not be facing the webcam ... Then turn your head to look at the webcam."

- **Practice with a friend.** "Have your friend tell you if the lighting is free of weird shadows, if the sound is clear of echoes, if your face is far away enough so that you are not leering yet close enough so that your expressiveness can come through," suggested Caroline Ceniza-Levine, career expert with SixFigureStart. And check your mannerisms at the door, advised Mike Honeycutt, a tech-issues consultant. "Normal mannerisms are magnified on Skype, so avoid rapid movements." He also suggested practicing at the same time of day as the interview will occur, "to account for background noises" (trains, garbage trucks, mail delivery, cuckoo clocks, etc.).
- **Look at the camera, not the screen.** "Your eyes tend to go to faces on the screen, instead of the camera," noted Marilyn Santiesteban, assistant director of graduate and alumni career services at Bentley University in Waltham, Mass. "To your interviewer you will appear to be looking down instead of making eye contact. To avoid this, tape your webcam to the side (not above) your comput-

er. If you are using a laptop with a built-in camera, cut out a face and tape it onto the camera (cut a hole for the lens in one eye) to remind yourself to look there instead of the screen."

Looking Your Best

- **"Makeup is a must — for women and men,"** according to Santiesteban. "High-definition cameras pick up every flaw. Women look best with foundation and a slightly brighter-than-usual blush and lipstick. Both genders should use a little face powder, since skin sheen can look like nervous perspiration. Men who have visible skin on top of their heads should powder that, too." According to Norfolk, Va.,-based image consultant Sandy Dumont, "If you are over 50 you should wear foundation with heavy coverage. In general, wear professional makeup — no brown lipstick, no eyeshadow in bright colors." And pay attention to your hands; neutral nail color is the best choice.
- **Make sure your clothes** are pressed and clean, Garber suggested. The flaws do show up on screen.
- **Wear strong colors.** Some colors and patterns photograph better than others, Santiesteban said. "Navy blue, black, brown and charcoal look sharp. Avoid prints, herringbone tweeds and striped ties because they 'vibrate' onscreen as the camera keeps trying to adjust to the way light hits those patterns." Also avoid red; it "bleeds" on camera.
- **Avoid jewelry that clangs, dangles or distracts.** Leave the charm bracelet in the jewelry box. Choose tailored accessories. ▶▶

- **Sit on your jacket.** It's a TV anchorman trick to keep a blazer or suit jacket from riding up over your collar. "Pull your jacket down in the back and sit on it to look polished," Kires said.

Day of The Interview

- **Establish a noise-free zone.** Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door. Turn off your cell phone and mute your land line. "Make sure no one else is home and figure out how to prevent the dog from barking," Yaskin quipped. It all contributes to a serene environment in which you can be calm, collected and do your best.
- **Test the internet connection at least 15 minutes early,** Honeycutt suggested, noting that having a back-up computer, if available, could give you real peace of mind in case of technical problems.
- **Be fully dressed.** "Don't just dress from the waist up, with pajamas or sweats on the bottom," Kires laughed. "You never know when you might have to unexpectedly stand up." And dress for success — business wear — just as you would for an in-person interview.
- **Time it right.** Be aware of time zones in the event your interviewer is 3,000 miles away, the CompuHealth guide advises. Make it a point to

arrive early. Be online and on-screen when your interviewers arrive.

During the Interview

- **"Speak slowly and distinctly,"** advised Dumont, adding, "use your 'lower voice' to communicate confidence and professionalism." And practice good posture at all times.
- **Keep it conversational, not rehearsed,** Santiesteban said. "And if you have an accent, mention it early on. You could say, 'You may have noticed I have an accent; I'm originally from China. Please let me know if you would like me to repeat or rephrase anything.' Then check in periodically to make sure you are being clear."
- **Maintain key talking points** about yourself and your experience; keep them available but out of the camera's range. "Make sure to introduce some of these points early in the conversation, and pepper them throughout the interview," Higman said.
- **Remember you CAN be seen.** "Skype interviewees sometimes forget they are on video conference and forget the interviewer can see them," Garber said. "I've seen candidates put the interview on mute only to accept packages from FedEx or to let the dog out." ■

Networking Know-How

Breathe life into your connections with tips from experts

By Valerie Neff Newitt

► **NETWORKING IS MORE** than meeting someone and mentioning you're looking for a job. The success of the effort is in the nuances. But exactly how do you breathe opportunity into a chance encounter with a professional contact? *ADVANCE* turned to career experts to get the answers you need.

Linda Dulye, president and founder of Dulye & Co., a communications and change management consultancy in Warwick, N.Y., and founder of the Dulye Leadership Experience at Syracuse University, broke it down this way: "The power of networking begins with the ability to have a conversation. I can't tell you how many times people think they can really connect with a 'powerful' email or text. Wrong! The power of networking comes through building a relationship. That doesn't happen electronically. It happens through seeing and hearing a person, making a personal connection."

Prepare in Advance

If you know you are going to be in the proximity of someone influential, Dulye suggested that you make it a point to prepare. Here's how:

- **Practice a firm handshake.** Obvious, perhaps, but many people fail this opening move. "A ►►

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handshake is a very powerful first impression; it matters,” Dulye said. If the person you are meeting does not immediately extend a hand, extend yours. Be proactive.

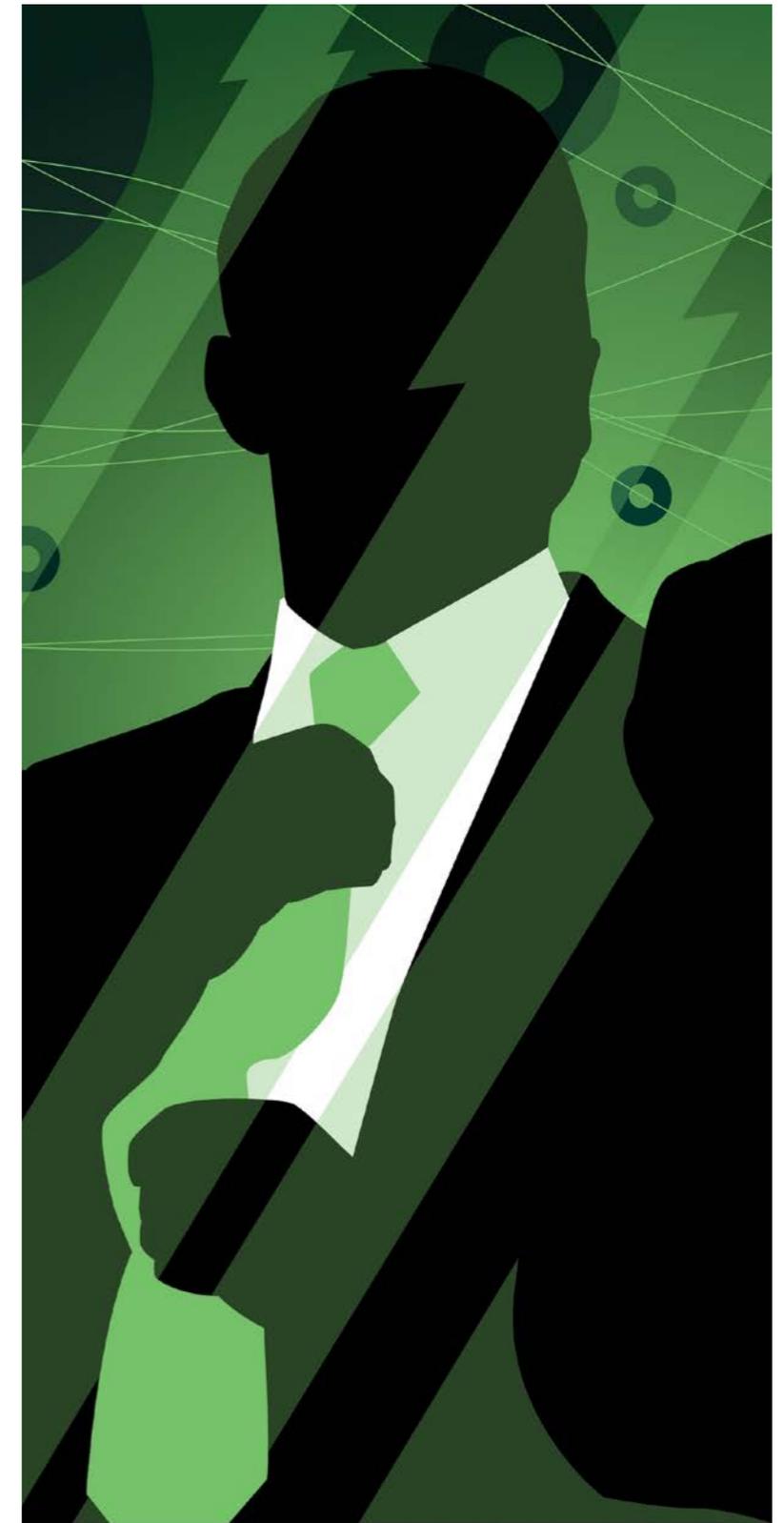
- **Find common ground.** Do a little research on people you expect to meet, “... so you say why you are excited to meet them, and be armed with a provocative question about their spe-

While face-to-face connections are imperative, don't dismiss the importance of electronic networking. Make sure your Linked In profile is professional and up-to-date.

cialty area, their speech, their experience, their last published work, their passion — whatever might make them listen and respond to you,” said Dulye. She noted that although the internet makes it easier than ever to do research on others, not everyone makes the effort. Yet it is exactly that sort of extra step that makes the “network” start to buzz. In short: do it.

- **Perfect an “elevator speech.”** “In no more than 30 seconds, you need to be able to say something compelling about yourself — who you are and what makes you valuable to a facility based on your interests, your skills, your passion,” Dulye said. This takes rehearsal; it doesn't roll out perfectly on your first try. Craft it, edit it, perfect it.

- **Be at ease.** People tend to relax, open up and connect with others who are not overly nervous or anxious. So take a deep breath, smile, and showcase your personality and interests, not your anxiety level.
- **Have a “leave behind.”** “It's important to have something to leave with the person you've met, such as a powerful bio or resume that does one thing: explains the value you can bring to an organization,” Dulye said. “This is different from listing places you've worked and tasks you've done. It's about results you are able to bring and make happen. That's really the one thing people want to know most about someone else if they are going to create a relationship or network with you.”
- **Follow up.** Build on a personal encounter with a written communication, Dulye advised. “Within 24 hours, send an email. But the real differentiator comes afterward: Send a personal, handwritten note. Include a pertinent article you've seen, or something you think the person might find particularly interesting,” Dulye advised. “This will set you apart.”
- **Practice perpetual preparedness.** “Do three things every single day to better prepare yourself for your career, your next interaction, your next opportunity,” said Dulye. “It might be reading a blog, doing research on a facility, finding out where the next conference is and who the keynote speaker will be. You need to take a very proactive role in educating yourself every single day and learning more about the career you have chosen.” ▶▶



Remember the Four I's

Susan Washburn, leadership and career coach with MOR Associates in Watertown, Mass., boiled the entire networking process into what she calls “the four I's,” a handy list to track the necessary steps:

- 1. Initiate.** Approach the person you wish to meet.
- 2. Introduce yourself.** You can create a positive reaction to your fledgling interaction by offering a succinct snapshot of yourself — your education, your interest in a job, your goals.
- 3. Inquire.** Ask about the person's area of specialty, or the topic of her presentation, or where he's originally from. “Starting the conversation with a question takes the pressure off of you, because it gets the other person talking. It starts a dialogue,” Washburn said.
- 4. Influence.** “Know your own brand,” Washburn said, “and what you want to represent on the outside of your ‘packaging.’ People get caught off guard because they haven't thought it through. But you must be prepared for every opportunity. It's a form of currency, a social capital, if you will. You must be intentional without being artificial.”

Play Nice

Jon Harol, a certified personal consultant (CPC) and a certified senior professional of human resources (SPHR), is managing partner and a healthcare recruiter at Lighthouse Recruiting in Apex, N.C. He noted that every personal encounter — be it with a consultant, the person sitting next to you in the cafeteria at a conference, or your boyfriend's father whose sister is an NP — could turn into a networking opportunity. Even fellow students or cranky co-workers could one day be in a position to pull you up a career ladder, he reminded. So play nice.

“Recognize that your current network is comprised of the people around you, whether you like it or not,” advised Harol. “It's a small world and you will run into these people again. Make sure they keep you in high regard. Nothing positive that can come from poor relationships.”

Harol also said that while face-to-face connections are imperative, one can't dismiss the availability of electronic networking. To that end he suggested, “Establish a presence on LinkedIn and spend some time researching and connecting with industry peers. And by all means, ask for recommendations — a built-in feature of the site — from co-workers, supervisors or instructors now instead of 4 years from now when you may be looking for a job. It can be hard to track down former coworkers or managers years later, and their diligence in writing a recommendation could be softened with the passage of time.”

Link In with Others

Career expert Jodi Glickman, author of *Great on the Job: What to Say, How to Say It, The Secrets of Getting Ahead*, concurred that plucking the multiple benefits of LinkedIn is an essential of contemporary networking.

“Get your LinkedIn profile up to speed, because that has become the new resume,” she explained. “LinkedIn is the preeminent professional networking site — have your profile complete and polished — indicative of who you are and where you want to go next.”

And Glickman also suggested taking advantage of the “recommendations” feature by asking people to “speak to your abilities so that prospective employers can see you are highly regarded. Why wouldn't anyone serious about finding a job do that?” she asked. “It's such low-hanging fruit, there's no reason not to grab it.” ■