

Training tool helps unemployed job seekers grow networking skills

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For many, networking is often perceived as an expected—if uncomfortable—part of the job-seeking process. University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management researchers found they could

improve reemployment quality—especially among those who identified as more introverted— through the development of a new training tool focused on increasing networking understanding and skills.

The findings are published in the journal *Personnel Psychology*.

"There are a large number of people who find networking almost distasteful and often have misconceptions about what networking is," said Connie Wanberg, professor in the Carlson School and lead author of the study. "It's not about asking for a job, it's really a much broader technique that can help job seekers find a position that better suits their needs."

To understand how job seekers could achieve more through networking, Wanberg and her colleagues developed [Building Relationships and Improving Opportunities](#) (BRIO). Available online for free, the 10 lesson training covers elevator pitches, getting advice, developing goals and more.

"Through these online lessons, we provide not only practical steps for job seekers, but language and scenarios based on the idea that individuals gain knowledge by watching others take part in activities and social interactions," said Wanberg. "People who take the BRIO training watch as Jack, our sample job seeker, goes through the process of building his network."

Working with unemployed job seekers seeking assistance through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, researchers found the online training:

- helped job seekers improve their networking skills and motivation, especially among introverted job seekers who are generally more uncomfortable with networking, leading to a

higher amount of networking intensity (i.e., the amount of networking an individual partook in);

- increased the immediate, or proximal, benefits of networking, such as referrals to new sources, helping the person define an issue and validation of decisions;
- led to better employment rates and higher quality positions as defined by the job seeker, such as higher salary, stable hours or being closer to home.

"Our research illustrates that helping a person build confidence in [networking](#) led to more people finding [jobs](#) that suit their needs," said Wanberg.

However, Wanberg notes, she and her colleagues were unable to determine if the training improved how quickly people found a job.

This is the first study to examine how unemployed [job seekers](#) learn to network. Future studies would need to compare online training with in-person training, as well as if the [training](#) would need to be adapted to different types of job seeker groups, cultures and economies. This study was conducted in the U.S. during a time of low unemployment and with participants who had some post-high school education.

More information: Connie R. Wanberg et al. Can job seekers achieve more through networking? The role of networking intensity, self-efficacy, and proximal benefits, *Personnel Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/peps.12380](https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12380)

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