

How to use a network when job hunting



Last time we wrote about why it's so important, as a regional specialist, to cultivate a local network. Let's say you now have the beginnings of a great network – how can you leverage this in your job search and your actual work?

A network is a flexible asset. It can be used in areas such as due diligence, complex research projects, government engagement and strategic communications, regulatory analysis, political risk analysis, business development, and others.

Here are some ways you can explain the value of your network when looking for jobs:

Talk about how you can use your network to pressure test your assumptions and challenge your conclusions. This is critical to high quality research and will demonstrate the diversity of tools you use when conducting research to make it more nuanced.

Highlight how it can give you additional access to people on the ground with unique perspectives, which could, in turn, differentiate the employer against competitors or give them an added edge. Or it could add value to the end customer with higher-quality outcomes.



Think about your network as also a way to get greater exposure to the outside world. For instance, could your network help you to get quoted in the local media or to get in front of a local company that otherwise would not be accessible?

To demonstrate your network to a potential employer, you need to do two things:

Describe the types of people you know on the ground (and maybe add a bit of commentary about the way their insights can be helpful). Describe where they are located, what types of things they do, and what aspect of the country or society they can help to reveal.

Give examples of how you have used these contacts in the past for similar projects. If you can describe a situation in which you reached out to contacts and that resulted in higher quality product or insight, that's a perfect way to illustrate not only that you have a network, but that you also know how to use it.

One last thing: thinking about your friends in a country or your host family as "network" that you can use for your own personal advancement may seem a bit strange, but the two are not contradictory.

If you think of a network as a group of people from the ground who you listen to to help you understand what is happening, this doesn't need to come at the expense of friendships or relationships. If anything, asking people what they think and showing genuine respect for their opinions can even strengthen relationships!



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