



Devoting Time & Resources to Networking

by Alan A. Malinchak (1984-2004)

Expanding Your FBI Network

All current, former and retired FBI Special Agents and professional support employees learned at each juncture of their FBI careers the importance and meaningfulness of the FBI Family. Your FBI Family connection — those special people you met before, during and since your FBI career — provides myriad networking connections as you transition from public service to private industry. It is important to develop, maintain and nourish a network of your trusted friends and associates both within the FBI and through other federal law enforcement and non-law enforcement federal agencies and military branches — even leveraging your “strength of weak ties.”

Ideally you have joined the Society and have maintained your membership in the FBIAA. Through these organizations you can identify and connect with individuals — who also have connections. As you build your **connective power** you gain insight from others into current or near-future position openings. Those with this **connective intelligence** have a greater likelihood of attaining a private-sector position. Just as informants and cooperating witnesses were a key to your success in the FBI, your expanded network of FBI and other connections are now your *137s* and *CWs*.

STRATactical Approach

Prior to **tactically** engaging in actions to obtain a post-FBI career, you must develop a **strategy**. Start with some questions.

- Where, geographically, do you want to work? Is that your current location? Or is there a geographic location that is appealing both now and when you finally make the decision to totally retire?
- Do you want to work in a large or a small organization?
- In what specific industry do you want to work — government contracting, commercial, non-profit or entrepreneurial?
- Does that industry exist within the geographic location you have identified?
- Within that industry, are there positions available in the function, project or program you want to work? Are there specific companies that are in the location and industry you have identified that have a position you believe matches your capabilities, thus increasing the probability of your being hired?

Collecting Data

Use your connective and intelligence skills to begin to collect data — you know the importance of taking notes and keeping track of where you were when you investigated cases; that skill remains beneficial.

First, contact those prior FBI trusted professionals you know who have already made the transition from the FBI to a private career. Identify and reach out to them. Develop something as easy as an Excel spreadsheet to track your data and progress, as in this example:

Name	Company	Phone/ Email	How Did They Succeed?	What were the pitfalls?	Lessons Learned?	Date of Initial Contact	Date of Follow Up Contact

While you are collecting data, you must simultaneously build a new professional network.

Building Your Post-FBI Professional Network

Now that you have identified where you want to live, what you want to do in the private sector and which specific position you believe best fits your capabilities, it's time to make as many connections in as many industry places you have identified as you can — join professional associations, establish a LinkedIn account, attend professional networking functions/events, volunteer at non-profit associations and establish relationships with recruiters. Making connections professionally and socially is key and allows people to know you are looking for your next career and that you have something to offer. As a current or former FBI Agent you understand and know the benefits of building rapport — start now to strengthen your professional networking skills beyond those in or related to the FBI. Your FBI career is a door opener for hiring managers — most people will be fascinated by your story.

Where to start?

As an example, let's assume you have identified Tampa, FL, as a desired location. You know your work as a project manager during the last five years of your FBI career was both exciting and rewarding, and you want to continue in that field. You know you are interested in working for a large government contractor. Below are suggestions of next-steps in developing and building this network:

- Obtain a list of the top five government contractors in Tampa, FL.
 - Review each contractor's Web site for information regarding the company, executives and openings in project management.

- Determine who is on its board, who are its executives and who are its current project managers.
- Determine which social and professional associations, charities and other organizations the contractor is associated with.
- Review all of the contractor's connections and then repeat the steps.
- Join organizations and attend events — virtually or in-person
 - Develop rapport with individuals first
 - Soft sell your desire to obtain employment
- Establish yourself on social media sites, in particular LinkedIn
 - Develop a succinct and targeted profile focused on your next career, using your current or former FBI KSAs as relevant but not exclusive information
- Establishing Relationships with Recruiters who are connected to the companies you have targeted
- Review public information regarding networking opportunities, for example:
 - www.washingtonnetworkgroup.com — business related networking events.
 - www.meetup.com — connections to social and business gatherings.
 - www.bizjournals.com — business networking opportunities, receptions and events.
 - www.Bisnow.com — social and professional networking events.
 - www.linkedin.com – profiles; contacts; and, jobs
 - <http://www.contactscount.com>
 - <http://www.astd.org/Publications/Magazines/TD/TD-Archive/2013/01/Intelligence-the-Importance-of-Being-Known> — Assessments, tips and training.

Just as you tracked your FBI network, you need to track how you are developing your extended professional network.

Name of Company or Professional Association	Identified People	Phone/Email	How/Why are those People Connected to those Organizations	What did You Learn?	What Do You Need to Do and By When?	Date of Initial Contact	Date of Follow Up Contact

Good luck and stay focused — your next position is within reach!

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