

GUIDE TO NETWORKING



Networking is, perhaps, the least understood yet **most effective** job strategies. It is a vague term, and hard to define because it has so many different forms. Still, professionals will tell you that Networking is one of the most effective tools that you can employ in your job search.

What is networking?

Networking is the process of developing a list/collection of people you can call on for help with various aspects of your job search. Your network should include people who are willing to give you information about their specific career field(s) and people who can give you information about job opportunities within their organization. Remember, you never know who knows whom!

How difficult is it to network?

Networking is something you have been doing for a long time, but you never thought about it as networking. Have you ever asked a classmate if they knew of any good place to eat in “the city”? When you ask people in the residence halls for the best professor when selecting your course sections, you are networking! Networking is tapping into your connections for helpful information and advice. Now you need to reframe this experience and place it in the context of the job search.

How important is networking?

In the current economic environment, employers will tell you that they receive hundreds of unsolicited resumes each month. How can your resume stand out from the crowd? Networking can help in that you can refer to an individual in your cover letter - thus giving your resume some added advantage. In other instances, your contact(s) may give you information about positions that have not even been posted. Another important aspect is that you can gain valuable insight into a profession. Learn the pros/cons of a specific career field, job function, and or employer. Learn from your network how they started their career and the steps it took to get to their current position. Networking can be a valuable asset to you as you decided what it is that you want to do and you search for positions.

Get Started Networking!

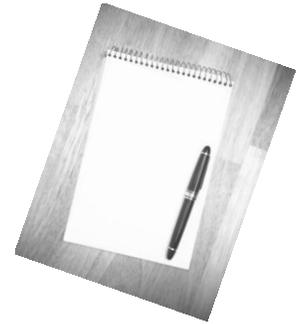
- Make lists - Who do you know?

Group your contacts: previous employers, faculty, classmates, alumni and have full contact information about each person

- Define the purpose for contacting individuals.

Is your purpose to let them know that you are actively looking for a full-time position? To let them know that you know about a specific position within their organization and that you are interested in that position? Do you need more information about the career field prior to deciding which option(s) are best for you? Do you want experience, in the form of an internship? Is it the case that you are seeking information about a specific company?

- What do you have to offer and what are you seeking?
Before you can engage someone in conversation about your career, you need to ask yourself what are your strengths/weaknesses? Can you identify your skills, interests and values? What have been your greatest accomplishments? What interests you personally and professionally? Why?
- Develop those all-important “networking tools”.
Do you know what to say when you first meet one of your contacts?
Have you developed your **“30 second commercial?”**



Decide what you want from each person in your network

Each time you plug into your network you will need to decide why you are contacting various people.

If you are tapping into your network because you are looking for a job then you may be calling them for the following reasons:

1. You are interested in scheduling an informational interview - a great way to get in the door and talk with the people who can hire you. This is a very non-threatening method to talk with people about what they do and about their business. You can gather information, get advice, show them your resume, and get the names of other contacts. In the future, they may think of you when they have an opening.
2. You heard they have/know of a job opening or ask them if they know of any job openings.

Making contact with your network

So, how do you make that initial contact? Generally, there are three ways to make that initial contact: phone, email, or letter. In all instances, it is important to follow-up and confirm your appointment. Be respectful of their busy schedules. If you are trying to schedule a time to meet, give them several dates and times. Remember to keep track of all your contacts and do not forget the all-important “Thank You” after you have met/talked with your network contact.

Questions You May Ask

General Questions About the Career Field:

- What are the various jobs available in this field?
- What is the employment outlook? What is the demand for people in this career?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?
- What skills/characteristics contribute most to success in this industry?
- What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning?



Questions about the Employer:

- What products or services are in the development stage now?
- What kinds of assignments might I expect in the first six months/one year?
- In what ways does a career with you differ from one with your competitors?
- Given the dynamics of the industry, how do you see the company evolving over the next five years?
- What types of training does your organization provide?

Questions About Your Contact's Job:

- What specifically do you do? What are your duties and responsibilities?
- Describe some of most challenging situations you have faced in this job.
- What do you find most satisfying? Least satisfying?
- With which departments, functional units, or levels do you regularly interact?
- What interesting projects have you recently completed?

Questions About Preparation for the Career Field:

- What educational preparation do you recommend?
- Is prior experience necessary and, if so, what kind?
- If you were a college student again, what would you do differently to prepare for this job?

Questions About Your Contact's Career Path:

- In what way did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- What are related jobs for which your background would prepare you?
- Where do you go from here in your career?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

Questions about Organizational Culture:

- What do you like most about your company?
- What kinds of behaviors are rewarded?
- How would you describe the atmosphere? Is it formal or more casual?
- What values are most treasured here; what is the company's vision statement?
- How does the company recognize the contributions of outstanding employees?

Questions about Opportunities for Advancement:

- What are the advancement opportunities?
- How long does it take to move from one step to the next?
- What is the typical career path for someone in this field?
- Where could I expect to be in three years/ five years?
- What is the highest position that someone can hold in this career?

Questions You May Be Asked

In an information interview, it is not uncommon for your contact to reverse roles and ask questions of you. Following are some basic questions for which you should be prepared.

- Tell me about yourself.
- How did you become interested in this career field?
- What do you know about this field or about this organization?
- What skills can you bring to this field/job?
- What have you learned from your work experiences or coursework that leads you to this field?

A Final Note on Networking

Be considerate of your contact by sticking to the allotted time. You may say something like, "Well, it looks like I have time for one last question." Your interviewer can then either end your interview with the question or invite you to ask additional questions. Always be prepared to request the names of additional people you can add to your network of contacts. This is especially important if your goal is to obtain more job leads and contacts in the field. Ask for a business card and inquire whether your contact would mind if you stayed in contact with him or her. Finally, thank the interviewee for his/her time and always follow-up with a thank-you letter, either by e-mail or mail.