



# Networking

## What is networking?

Networking is simply a process of building connections to others. It can be an extremely useful tool to acquire information, advice, and referrals about careers, industries, internship opportunities, and job prospects. Networking works best if you try to focus on getting advice from the life experience of the individual rather than asking for something like a job or internship.

## Why is networking important?

You can find out about job opportunities that are not yet posted. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 70% of all jobs are found through networking. Additionally networking allows you to...

- Expand your knowledge of different career paths, industries, and organizations
- Gain advice about developing your professional skills
- Establish relationships that could launch or further your career
- Differentiate yourself from other candidates

## How to network?

Step 1: Reach out to people that you already know. Share your personal and professional goals with them. Use your network to generate referrals to connect with others knowledgeable about your industry. Options include:

- Extended family
- Friends or acquaintances
- Past or present teachers, professors, or academic advisors
- Past supervisors or work colleagues
- Registered student organizations
- Past or present volunteering opportunities
- Virtual connections in Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn

Step 2: Build connections with people that you do not know to expand your network. To make new connections consider the following actions:

- Participate with an academic or pre-professional registered student organization
- Join a professional organization in your field of interest
- Attend a professional conference or attend employer information sessions
- Volunteer in the community
- Complete an internship or get a part time job
- Create a LinkedIn profile and connect with alumni and professional groups



## How to introduce yourself?

Create an elevator pitch, a 20-30 seconds speech to introduce yourself. It should include the following pieces of information:

- Who are you?
- What/why are you interested in them/the company/industry/position?

### Informational Interview Example

*"Hello. I am (your name) and I am a sophomore studying Political Science and History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am hoping to pursue a career working in local and state government. After attending a workshop at The Career Center called "Pizza and a Professional," where you served as an alumni panelist, I feel that your expertise could be invaluable to my career development. Would it be possible to speak with you for 15-20 minutes over the phone or in person about your career path and current experiences?"*

### Internship/Job Example

*"Hello. I am (your name). In May I will be graduating with my bachelor of science degree in Community Health with a concentration in Healthcare Administration. Recently I saw an entry level position posted on I-link at your healthcare consulting firm. Currently I am completing an internship at Presence Covenant Hospital where I have been able to gain experience in several departments and participate on strategic initiative discussions for the hospital. I believe that this experience may make me a strong candidate for the position. Could you tell me more about this position and what skills I need to demonstrate to make me your ideal candidate?"*

## How to network at social engagements?

- Introduce yourself to the organizer. He/she can explain the organization and introduce you to other attendees.
- When meeting new people, ask open-ended questions. Truly listen and care about their responses. Build rapport and trust. Your goal should be to cultivate friendships.
- Aim to meet a few new people and begin a meaningful dialogue. Exchange contact information with the people that you are truly interested in building a connection.
- Do not be afraid to join a group already in conversation. In most cases, the people will enjoy a chance to meet someone new. If you sense that it is a serious discussion, you can politely excuse yourself.
- Follow up with connections within 24-48 hours with new connections that you meet.

## How to follow up with a connection?

It is critically important to maintain contact with individuals. Try one or more of these action to build on your relationship:

- Send a handwritten or e-mail thank you note within 24-48 hours after a meeting.
- Request to connect on LinkedIn with a personal message. Do not use the populated message.
- Keep a record of your contacts and referrals.
- Follow through on the advice your contacts shared with you and update them on your progress.