

NETWORKING

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is the 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 the 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 who are knowledgeable about your desired industry. Options include:

- Extended family
- Friends or acquaintances
- Past or present teachers, professors, or academic advisors
- Past or present supervisors or work colleagues
- Registered student organization connections
- Past or present volunteering opportunities
- Virtual connections on Facebook, Instagram, 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 in an academic or pre-professional registered student organization
- Join a professional organization in your field of interest
- Attend a professional conference or employer information sessions
- Volunteer in the community
- Complete an internship or work a part time job
- Create a LinkedIn profile to connect with alumni and professional groups

HOW TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Create an elevator pitch, which is 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 the person/company/industry/position?
- (For Jobs/Internships) Why are you qualified? What can you offer them?
- Try to end with an open ended question (What? Where? Why? How?) to keep the conversation moving forward.

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 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 Handshake 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 in 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 an 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. Actively listen to their responses. Build rapport and trust. Your goal should be to cultivate relationships.
- Aim to meet a few new people and begin meaningful dialogue. Exchange contact information with the people that you are truly interested in building a connection with.
- Do not be afraid to join an already established 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 you make within 24-48 hours.

HOW TO FOLLOW UP WITH A CONNECTION

It is critically important to maintain contact with individuals. Try one or more of the following 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.