
NETWORKING

Ever heard the phrase, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know”? To expand who you know, you need to net-work. Networking is the process of developing and maintaining relationships with people such as family, friends, former employers, professors and staff. It’s often a concept that sounds more intimidating than it actually is. If you have ever asked a classmate for a suggestion on what class to take, then you have used your network. Networking connections are not always logical, and you never know who will lead you to the person you need. It’s not all about what your network can do for you; you also need to offer your advice or connections to your contacts.

What is Networking?

The General Definition: The process of interacting with individuals who have interests similar to yours, who are willing to share information about those common interests, or provide the names of others with similar interests.

The Career Related Definition: The process of interacting with individuals who either have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you, who are willing to share information about their position or organization, or provide the names of others who have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you. One of the most popular and structured ways this interaction can take place is through an information interview.

The Career Related Purposes of Networking: 1) To learn more about careers in general and 2) To establish relationships that could indirectly result in a job lead

Why is networking important?

- Networking is regarded as one of the most effective career exploration and job search strategies.
- 80% of job vacancies are never advertised. You may only be exposed to 20% of available jobs.
- The overall amount of time it takes for you to find a job can be drastically reduced (estimated to be 4-6 months if you network as opposed to 6-9 months using other job search methods).
- The referral process can put you in contact with key people you might otherwise never meet.
- Build a list of contacts in your field of interest.
- Future employment; sixty-seventy percent of jobs are landed using a network.

Successful Tools for Building & Maintaining

Social Media:

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/) is a professional networking site that allows registered users to maintain a list of people they know and trust. It is a great way to keep up with current contacts, join groups of interest, and also expand your network.

Career/Networking Events:

Look on Career Development's website to find out about scheduled events. Always have a resume prepared for use when attending internship/job fairs. Create a business card - it's a convenient and professional way to exchange contact information with others (especially at a networking event where you might not bring a resume).

Elevator Speech:

- An elevator speech is a thirty-second speech prepared for those instances where you may run into someone working for the company you are interested in or someone with more information. Having one prepared will help you to say what you want in a few sentences.
- Be clear that you are seeking information and be prepared to ask open-ended questions to help you gain information.

A sample elevator speech (for use at an internship/job fair or networking event) may look something like this:

Be prepared!

- Ask for additional leads and contacts; follow up with "Thank you" notes and do favors in return.

Possible Network Contacts

People You Know Well:

Your Parents

Your Parents' Friends

Your Friends

Church Members

Your Friends' Parents

People on Your Christmas Card List

Neighbors

Relatives

Classmates (High School and College)

People related to the industry:

Group and Club Members

Trade Association Members

Professional Organization Executives

Speakers at meetings you have attended

People you have met at conferences

Professors

Past Supervisors (Work or Internship)

Past Colleagues/Clients/Business Partners

People who know people:

Local Chamber of Commerce

Local Bank Managers

Politicians

Lawyers

Career Counselors

Local Reporters

Doctors/Dentists

Hair Dressers

Teachers

Alumni

Restaurant Owners

Local Merchants

Travel Agents

Clergy/Church Leaders

Career Development

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