



Network Your Way to the Top

“It’s all about who you know”. That saying holds true when it comes to finding a job or internship, advancing in your career, moving to a new city and in many other circumstances. “Who you know” is your network of contacts: from friends of your parents to co-workers to college professors. It is never too late to create a strong network; however the earlier you begin networking the more contacts you will have, which in turn will lead to more opportunities!

Up to 80% of jobs are filled without employer advertising – networking can give you a key to this “hidden job market”.

What is Networking?

Networking is the process of connecting with people, gathering information and building a professional support system to help you mature as a professional and reach your goals. In networking with others you agree to a give-and-take relationship. Therefore, when you have resources that could benefit someone in your network, you should offer information to help them in achieving their goals as well.

Prepare to Network

It is essential to be prepared so you have a plan when meeting with a potential contact.

1. Know your interests, skills, abilities, and values and be able to talk about them.
2. Research the key people, employers, and current trends in your industry.
3. Prepare questions to ask ahead of time about the field, company, and/or position that interest you.
4. Ask for referrals to additional professionals in the field. This is how your network of contacts continues to grow.
5. Ask for a business card so you can send a thank you letter or follow-up e-mail after a meeting.
6. Stay organized! Keep track of your contacts (name, company, contact information, date of last contact, summary of discussion, etc).
7. Maintain the relationship by staying in contact over time (i.e. send an e-mail, invite them to lunch, call them).

Strategies to Network

Every person you know is a potential source for career information! Start by listing all the people you already know and then list all the people you would like to get to know. Additional strategies:

- Seek out faculty within your field of study.
- Contact former employers no matter the field or industry.
- Talk to alumni from your school.
- Tell your friends and family about your job search.
- Seek out people at organizations of interest.
- Volunteer at organizations in which your skills and talents are needed.
- Join a professional organization and utilize everything they have to offer.
- Attend professional conferences to meet professionals in your field.
- Always have copies of your resume or business cards with you. You never know when you might meet a potential contact.
- Utilize online resources such as LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com. Join the SNC Alumni and Friends Group.
- Join a young professionals network.
- Utilize the Career Contact Program: www.snc.edu/go/careerconnections.

It's not called "networking" if you start when you're searching for a job/internship... instead this may be perceived as looking for favors.

Hint: Start networking before you actually need a network.

Introduce Yourself

Introducing yourself may seem like a simple task to do, but there's more to it. You want to provide interesting information about yourself that will "hook" the potential contact and make them want to get to know you more. Be sure to include:

- A greeting (Hi or Good Morning)
- Your full name
- Where you work or attend school
- What field you work in or are currently studying

Pay attention to your nonverbal behavior.

- Smile
- Make eye contact
- Give a firm hand shake
- Remain positive in conversation

When networking with someone you've already been introduced to, skip the introduction and **start the conversation light** using small talk. For example, the weather, the latest headlines in the news, or upcoming events. Then you can start in with the questions you've prepared to ask them.

TIP: Use the 60 Second Commercial (www.snc.edu/career/docs/60secondcommercial.pdf) as a method of introducing yourself!

LinkedIn Tips & Etiquette

www.linkedin.com

1. **Fill out your profile completely.** An incomplete profile tells others that you're going to use this resource but don't have enough time to show others how you can assist them.
2. **Don't connect to "strangers".** Establishing a minimal relationship with a person first and making an initial contact before connecting is considered appropriate.
3. **Be honest about your intentions before requesting.** If you're requesting a recommendation or connection because you are job seeking, say so.
4. **Give and take equally, without abuse.** This can be as simple as extending a genuine thank you. Do not over-use your network.
5. **Stay active on LinkedIn, passing along requests or giving reasons why you won't.** Don't let requests go unnoticed or un-responded to, or the same will happen to you.
6. **Avoid the generic text and create your own.** Adding a more personal touch is more memorable.
7. **For more LinkedIn tips:** www.snc.edu/career/students/linkedin.html.

Sample Questions to Ask

- What are the duties/responsibilities of your job? What do you do in a typical day/week?
- What knowledge/skills do you need for this job? What do employers look for?
- What do you think are the rewards/drawbacks to working in this job/field?
- What is the typical salary range? How high can the earnings go?
- What kind of advice would you give to someone considering this field?
- What is the future outlook in this field? Is there an oversupply/undersupply of qualified applicants?
- What obligations do your duties place upon you, outside of your workweek?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, work schedule, vacation, etc?
- What kind of background do I need to enter the field? Are particular schools valued in this field?
- How can I acquire the necessary skills? Are there courses or experiences which are recommended?
- What books/magazines could I read to better understand the field? Do you have regular readings?
- Do you have any advice for how I might go about finding a job/internship in this field?
- What is the best way to approach perspective employers? Best time?
- Would you be willing to look at my resume and tell me if it's appropriate for the jobs I'm seeking?
- Any suggestions about how I might improve the form and content of my resume?
- Are there other people you would suggest I talk to about careers in this field? Can I use your name as the person referring me?