A GUIDE TO NETWORKING

What Is Networking?

Walking into a room full of people is one of the top three fears of many people. Death and speaking in public are the other top two.

Networking is often associated with “sales” or with being “pushy.” Networking is neither.

- Networking is about building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships.
- Networking is about connecting with people who are willing and receptive to being helpful – and offering yourself as a resource.
- At its core, networking is the exchange of information, ideas and support.

Ideally, networking is a “win win” where both parties benefit. For job seekers, the benefits are not always equal nor immediately apparent. Networking takes practice and effort but can yield significant results and open up some very real opportunities.

Networking occurs in a number of ways:

**In-Person:** events; receptions; work-related events; at professional organizations and conferences

**People you don’t know yet:** via email, LinkedIn or other social media

**Faculty/Staff:** Approach networking with faculty and staff with the same formality you would an alumnus or recruiter. Faculty and staff are an important part of your network and can be influential in connecting you with recruiters and alumni. Show them you understand the etiquette you’ll need when connecting with those to whom they refer you.

**You will be an effective networker in all networking situations if you can:**

1. Be friendly, personable, open, confident and flexible.
2. Be generous and can find a way to give first and receive second
3. Be persistent and resilient. Understand and leverage the power of follow up!
4. Be proactive and research so you can ask the right question in an open and interesting manner
5. Be an active listener.

**Live, “In-person” Networking Situations**

“Working the Room”
1. Approach individuals and help these folks out. They are not sure how to break the ice. Just go introduce yourself. Ask “What brought you here today?” This will make them more comfortable and it’s a great conversation starter.

2. Approach “Open” groups where people are facing outward to some degree. This makes entering the conversation easier.

3. Observe “Closed” groups. The individuals in these groups will have their backs facing out and be in close conversation with one another. Come back later when you see the group open up.

4. Enter a large group only if you already know someone in it.

Introductions

1. When appropriate, introduce people to each other. Pay attention to conversation so your introductions can include something nice about each person to get the conversation started in a positive manner.

Moving On

1. If you have found some connection with the person and wish to be able to follow up, you may ask for a business card. This can be a signal that you will be moving on and can be communicated in the following manner “I’d love to follow up with you in the next couple of weeks. Would you mind sharing your card with me?”

You may also offer your own card to the individual. If desired, ask to call and the best number to use. (Savvy networkers will make a note on the back of a card to remind themselves of some detail related to the conversation, which will then become the opening for the next communication)

2. When leaving a conversation, be courteous and respectful. It is perfectly fine to say something like “It has been nice speaking with you and learning about _____. I’m going to go talk with several more people and look forward to another opportunity to connect with you. Enjoy your evening”. You do NOT have to ask everyone for their card!

In-person Networking Follow-up Scenarios

Be proactive and follow up within 24 hours! This is a real opportunity to make an additional positive impression, show strong communication skills and move the relationship forward. You’ll set yourself apart by taking this action as many people who network do not follow-up and lose valuable potential resources!
Below are a number of examples for various follow-up situations.

EXAMPLE: You met a recruiter with whom you would like to follow up

Dear Ms. O’Brien,

Hello! It was a pleasure to meet you last night at [insert event name]. I sincerely enjoyed speaking with you about your career, and I’m so glad I found someone who is as passionate about [insert topic of your conversation here] as I am.

As I mentioned yesterday, I’m incredibly excited to launch my career after graduation, and I look forward to the possibility of working with your company. Thank you again for your time.

Best,
Jennifer Chickering

EXAMPLE: You are requesting an informational interview with someone you met at an event

Hi Vinny,

Thank you so much again for taking the time to speak with me at the Company Networking Event in November. It was great to have a chance to hear about your background in Marketing Analytics. In fact, learning about some of the deals you worked on has further heightened my interest in this unique field.

When we spoke, you mentioned that if I was ever in Boston to let you know and we could possibly grab some coffee. If that offer is still open, I would like to take you up on that, as I will be in Boston in early January and would love to have an opportunity to chat with you more about your background and how you got started in your field. I will be in the city Jan. 7-11, so if you have any availability during that time, please let me know.

Thank you,

Jackie Stelman
EXAMPLE: You’ve met with someone who gave you some advice and a referral to speak with someone else.

Hi Jim,

Thank you so much again for taking the time to speak with me at the Finance Industry Networking Event in October. You provided such great advice on preparing for case interviews, and I appreciated your suggestion that I speak with Cindy Duncan.

I wanted to let you know that last week I had the opportunity to speak with Cindy, and she provided some great insight into how to prepare for interviewing. She even offered to do a practice case interview with me!

After my conversations with both you and Cindy, my case interviewing skills have improved greatly. I cannot thank you enough for encouraging me to speak with her as well as for all of your helpful advice.

Thank You,

Ben Grieder

EXAMPLE: You want to update a contact on your situation and ask for additional help

Hi John,

Thanks again for all your help answering my questions about the application process. You have been so helpful, and I truly appreciate all of the feedback you have provided.

I wanted to let you know that I recently had an interview and have been invited back for a second-round interview at the Boston office. I am very excited about this opportunity, and if you have any advice on how to prepare for this, I would really appreciate it. I hope to hear from you soon.

Thanks,

Matthew Abad

EXAMPLE: You want to inform your contact of a change in your career direction

Hi Sam,

I hope you have had a great summer - it seems to have flown by!
I wanted to let you know that my internship went really well and that I learned a great deal. I am grateful to have had that experience, and that I had the opportunity to be exposed to a few other areas in the firm as well.

It was so great to learn more about some other areas I had not really thought about before, and I am now thinking I may shift my focus a bit more into wealth management. As I turn my attention into this new direction, I would be grateful for any advice you may have or if you can recommend anyone I should talk to. Thank you so much, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Thanks,

Mikayla Brady

Calling a contact

EXAMPLE: You call someone you met at a networking event but get their voice mail

“Hello [insert their name], this is [insert your name], and we met at [insert the name of the event] yesterday. I just wanted to follow up and tell you that it was a pleasure to meet you, and I really enjoyed talking with you last night. If you’d like to call me back, my phone number is [insert phone number here]. Thank you so much for your time, and have a great day!”

EXAMPLE: You are calling for an initial or follow-up networking call

Hi, Bob. This is Ken garrison, a third-year marketing student from the Isenberg School of Management. [Pause to see if they remember you, but continue after 1-2 seconds if they don’t recall your name.] We communicated via email and set up a time to speak about your work and how you got started in advertising, as I am interested in a possible career in this field. [Pause] Is this still a good time to speak?

If yes: Thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to spend a little time chatting with me about your career. I really appreciate it! [Begin your questions/conversation.]

If no (e.g., something has come up or they completely forgot): I understand, and that is completely fine. Would it be alright if we set up a different time to speak? I would love to have the opportunity to chat with you at a time that’s more convenient, if that’s OK.
ALWAYS say thank you when closing a conversation. It is also advisable to ask if it would be alright for you to stay in contact with them again if you have additional questions or to stay in touch.

EXAMPLE: You want to send a thank you email following a live conversation

Hi Peter,

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy day to speak with me about the advertising industry, your work, and how you got started. Hearing more about all of the different projects you have worked on has inspired me, and I am convinced that it is the perfect industry for me. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about your experience working on the Starbucks project, and hope someday that I will be able to contribute to similar projects! I now have a much better understanding of the field as well. Again, thank you so much for your time.

Thank you,

Derek Edelstein

Connecting with people you have never met for advice or about an opportunity

Contacting people you have no connection to can be intimidating. At best, you may not get a reply. Worst case, you may get outright rejected. No one likes that. To increase your success when attempting to make a “cold” contact:

BASIC RULES

• Personalize…find out something about the person!
• Leverage your network for a “warm” lead. (Career Center, faculty or upperclassmen are often good places to start. Join ALUMNI groups in LinkedIn).
• Be thoughtful about who you approach (don’t email everyone at the company).
• Don’t send the same cover letter you sent with your application.
• Find out about the position and know what you have to offer; approach only if you are a good “fit”.

YOU may be the BEST candidate for an opportunity (finding good people is hard!!). Be prepared to offer the following:

• Feedback on a product
• Expertise in some related area
• Volunteer on a project

In order to be compelling, you must:

• Be very familiar with the company, the industry and the trends
• Be genuinely excited about the potential of an opportunity
EXAMPLE: You want to request an informational interview via LinkedIn from someone whom you have never met

Dear Mr. Smith,

I’m a junior Marketing major at Isenberg exploring a career in PR. I admire what you’ve accomplished in your role at xxxxxxxxxxxxx and wonder if you might be willing to speak with me briefly about your experience in this industry. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,
Melissa

EXAMPLE: You are requesting an informational interview via email (this is a contact provided by someone you know)

Dear Mr. Houston:

Kim Figueroa, Internship Director at the Isenberg School of Management’s Chase Career Center, provided me with your email address. I am a freshman interested in accounting and am seeking to learn more about careers in managerial accounting. Ms. Figueroa mentioned that you had significant experience as both an internal auditor and comptroller with a couple of manufacturing companies. She also indicated that you would be a tremendous resource for me.

If you are able to find time, I would like to set up a 20 – 30 minute meeting with you to do an informational interview to learn more about your career.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
James Kenney

Final Suggestions

• Follow up…always. It will differentiate you from those who don’t.
• Don’t take it personally if people don’t respond or a new relationship does not become significant.
• The more people you meet, the broader your network can become. Focus first on people you know, ask for referrals to their network and continue to branch out.
• Keep your networking contacts organized. Use a system that works for you. Track what types of communication and dates of interaction as well as next steps.

Practice does make perfect! Networking skills can be acquired. These are essential skills that open doors, expand your world, and create unbelievable opportunity in both your personal and your professional life. Put your fears aside, ignore the misperceptions, and give it a try!