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CAREER NETWORKING... DISCOVERING YOUR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

OVERVIEW

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NETWORKING MYTHS

Myth: Networking is attending big social or professional events with large crowds.

Reality: Although some networking does occur in these settings, networking can also occur in other venues, such as small groups or one-on-one.

Myth: If I go up to someone and start talking, they will think I have an ulterior motive.

Reality: As long as you are friendly and grateful, not pushy, most people will see you as ambitious, outgoing, mature, and professional.

Myth: If I ask for information, I will be imposing and they will be annoyed.

Reality: Most people are happy to do something for someone else, if asked.

NETWORKING DEFINED

- Getting out and meeting people either formally or informally in groups or one-on-one
- Learning a little about other people and telling them a little about you
- The process of actively communicating with people who may be able to give you career information, advice, and/or job leads
- An on-going process throughout your career

7 WAYS NETWORKING CAN HELP YOU

1. Obtain information about careers, companies and people in the industry
2. Gain job leads and information about potential sources of employment
3. Build personal contacts that can help make you known to potential employers
4. Gain mentors to assist you in your job search and career development
5. Determine current market value for your skills
6. Learn about the stability and pay scale of a company
7. Evaluate the possibilities for career change

The Hidden Job Market

This refers to all of the jobs that are currently vacant that are never posted anywhere. Up to 80% of vacant jobs are not advertised. They are filled by someone knowing someone or knowing of someone. In a recent survey, 60% of participants reported that they got their last job through networking.

Your Time Commitment

We have told you the success rate of networking. In today's fast-paced world, everyone wants everything now... or yesterday. While networking is extremely successful in opening up new job opportunities, it does not happen overnight. Sometimes networking can take many months before paying off, but the more you do it and the more effort you put into your job search, it should pay off sooner than later.

Networking is Not Like Interviewing

You are not trying to sell yourself directly to the person or people to whom you are talking. The object is to build relationships with other people and gain information and knowledge. The fact is that while you are not making a direct sales pitch, networking often results in new job opportunities. How? If you give them information about you and your goals, chances are, if they know of something, they will tell you. If they are impressed with you, they may talk to someone else about you. Now they are networking *for you*.

Networking can also lead to job opportunities because everyone prefers to hire someone they know or someone their friend knows. It gives us a certain comfort as compared to the uncertainty that comes with a perfect stranger.

Don't Quit Networking Once You Have a Job

Although you are thrilled right now to have the job that you wanted, you never know what the future holds. If you maintain your network, then it will make it easier for you to utilize them when you are looking for new opportunities in the future.

IDENTIFYING YOUR NETWORK

People You Know

- Family, friends, classmates
- Professors, advisors, coaches, tutors, clergy
- Your former bosses and co-workers
- People you meet when doing volunteer work
- Members of professional associations
- Networking events in your town

People You Don't Know

- Family and friends of *your* family and friends
- Co-workers of your friends and family
- Alumni
- On-line networking groups
- People working in your industry
- Anyone at companies you are interested in
- Human resource directors
- Community service organizations

NETWORKING EVENTS

What is a Networking Event?

A networking event is a professional conference or meeting, intended to have participants network with representatives from companies. Networking events can be sponsored by organizations, universities, or any other group that attracts contacts. Each company may have a designated table at the event.

Where Can You Network?

- Conferences, office parties, professional meetings, arranged lunches, informational interviews
- Any planned event where you will be meeting and interacting
- Employer Information Sessions or Employer Networking Nights on campus
- Find networking events in your campus events calendar, local newspapers, local websites, professional organization literature and websites, trade journals and magazines.

You Can Network With Anyone, Anytime

While there are organized events and professional settings where you can network, you never know when an opportunity will arise... in a department store when someone asks your opinion of something, on the train, while you are getting your hair cut, while waiting in a long line at the movie rental place, in the elevator (hence the term "elevator speech"). Almost anyone could be a good person to network with.

PREPARING FOR NETWORKING EVENTS

Research

Read all you can about the field prior to the interview. Research the industry and/or company and decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry. Prepare your resume, business card, and a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

Prepare a Target Speech

(a.k.a.: elevator speech, 30-second commercial, pitch). Keep it brief. Talk about who you are, what you do, and what you are looking for.

Have a Networking Plan

Who will be at the event? Who do you want to connect with? How will you talk to them or who will introduce you? What message do you want to get across? Do research about the companies and people that will be there.

Dress Appropriately

Formal or professional networking requires professional attire.

Bring Resume

You may have the opportunity to give your resume to contacts. Although you do not want to ask for a job, they may tell you of openings. You can also get your resume in front of them by asking if they would mind looking over your resume and giving you some feedback, if there is an appropriate opportunity. You may also offer to give them a copy in case they hear of anyone who has positions available that seem to match your set of qualifications and skills.

Create a Business Networking Card

Like a regular business card, a networking business card has your name, address, phone, email address. Instead of listing a job title and company, it focuses on your target areas, areas of strength, or a unique selling proposition. These are listed **on the back of the business card**. You could use your summary statement and an 'areas of impact' here, but due to space, it will probably have to be a shorter version.

TIPS FOR ATTENDING NETWORKING EVENTS

Attend Targeted Events

You may want to check out professional organizations or trade groups because there will be many more people in your industry at these events than general networking events that have a wide variety of industries.

Mingle

Don't stand in one spot the whole time. Don't stay within your comfortable group. Walk around the room. If you don't mingle, you won't meet new people or get your name out there, which defeats the purpose of networking. Don't stand in line. Networking should be groups of people talking. Groups of three are easy to get into because you can often start conversation with the person who appears to be doing most of the listening.

Limit Eating and Drinking

You do not want to slop on yourself or miss an opportunity to talk to someone because your mouth is full. Alcohol does not loosen you up or give a more favorable impression.

Build Rapport

Show interest in other people. Ask questions and let your personality show, while still being professional. People are more likely to refer you if they feel they “know” you. They don’t want to put their reputation on the line for a “stranger.”

Exchange Information

Helping a contact will only strengthen your relationship. It could lead to more frequent contact and a feeling of a mutual exchange. If you meet a senior executive, you may think you have nothing to offer them, but their daughter may be looking at colleges and interested in yours. You could offer to give her a tour or answer any questions she may have.

Ask Questions, but Don’t Ask for a Job. Instead, ask for advice. People are much more willing to give you time if you looking for information about the industry, the company, their career, or getting in the field.

Get Business Cards and Referrals

Do not leave without asking if they have another contact they can refer you. Ask permission to use their name when contacting that person. Ask for a business card and offer your business card and resume.

Follow-Up

After your meeting, write follow-up emails or make phone calls to say you enjoyed meeting them at the event. If you make contact with someone they referred you to, write a thank you note telling them who you met with and tell what you learned. Keep in touch every 1-2 months.

Tips for a Professional Conference

- Ask a mutual friend to introduce you
- Try to find common ground to establish rapport
- Ask appropriate questions and summarize your background and experience
- Ask to set up a short, informal meeting
- Get a business card
- Get permission to follow-up
- Before you leave the conference, write down pertinent information about the people you met
- Send each person a follow-up thank you note (make sure you include where and when you met)
- Volunteer to assist a speaker, run registration, etc. at a conference of professional event

Conversation Starters

- What did you think of the speaker today?
- How long have you been in this profession?
- Are you a member of any other professional organizations?
- What did you get where you are today?
- What company do you work for? What is your position?

Tips for Getting Out of a Long Conversation

- Introduce someone else to that person
- “Will you excuse me please? I need to get some refreshments.”
- “I’m sorry. Please excuse me. I see someone I would like to speak with.”

Tips for a Social Event

- Ask a mutual friend to introduce you
- If the person is willing to discuss business at a social event, introduce yourself and build rapport
- Summarize your background and experience and foster dialogue and ask questions
- Get permission to follow-up

Tips for Career Fairs

- **Find out who's coming** to the Career Fair. (note: the SCDC posts employer registrants on their websites)
- **Research companies.** What do they do? What kind of candidates are they seeking?
- **Select employers** you want to meet. If booth assignments are available, plan your route.
- **Have a flawless resume** ready to give employers.
- **Wear a suit.** Look professional.
- **Arrive early.** Sometimes the fair will open a few minutes early. You get first crack at the employers before they are tired and hot. It shows initiative and interest if you are there early.
- **Smile, shake hands, make eye contact.** Be confident and friendly. Let some personality show.
- **Have your target speech prepared** (30-second commercial / elevator speech).
- **Show interest.** Ask questions and listen attentively. Ask permission to follow-up.
- **Take a business card and literature.** Take other freebies selectively. Where will you put them all?
- **Send an email thank-you** to the employer. This is vital if you are really interested in an opportunity with this employer. Don't forget, they see many people at a career fair. The thank-you will make you stand out.

NETWORKING IN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational Interviewing is more structured than networking, because it is a *scheduled, one-on-one appointment* with a person in your field who can help you gain insight when searching for career opportunities and new options.

HOW INFORMATION INTERVIEWS BENEFIT YOU

You Can:

- Explore careers and clarify your career goal
- Learn what a field is really like and the future of the field
- Find out the skills and training needed to succeed in this industry
- Access the most up-to-date career information
- Gain information about getting into the field
- Discover employment opportunities that are not advertised
- Get information about an organization that you cannot find through research
- Expand your professional network
- Build confidence for your job interviews
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses
- They might even help move your application along!

STEPS TO FOLLOW TO CONDUCT AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

1. Develop a List of Your Network

These can be the first people you reach out to. They can provide you with new people to get in contact with. With your own list, you may be able to start sharing information and helping other people, as well.

2. **Identify the Occupation or Industry You Wish to Learn About**

Assess your own interests, abilities, values, and skills, and evaluate labor conditions and trends to identify the best fields to research.

3. **Prepare for the Interview**

- **Research**
- **Identify People to Interview.** Start with lists of people you already know - friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, neighbors, etc... Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.
- **Prepare a Target Speech and Questions to Ask**

4. **Arrange the Interview**

Contact the person to set up an interview by phone or by sending a letter introducing yourself and then following-up by phone. Ask for 15-30 minutes for an in-person meeting. Settle for the phone if that's all they are offering. **Call to confirm** your appointment the day before.

5. **Conduct the Interview**

- **Dress Professionally**, arrive on time, be polite and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion.
- **Build Rapport**
- **Exchange Information – Do Not Ask For a Job**

6. **Thank Them!**

Write a thank you note after meeting. Write another after meeting with the person they refer. Make it a little more personal than two sentences. You can:

- Mention what was particularly helpful or what you found interesting.
- Include some of the issues talked about and what you are going to do that they suggested.
- Close with, "I will let you know how it goes when I meet with (their referral)."

OTHER NETWORKING TIPS

Keep a Networking Log

Keep the business cards organized and make notes of who referred them to you (unless it's your own contact), the date you met with them, a few key points that were discussed, suggestions they made, names of any referrals they gave you, the date you sent a thank you note, and the date you made a follow-up contact.

Maintain Your Network

To keep in contact, send an email every 1-2 months. Sometimes call (to make that personal connection). Keep it brief. Provide an update about your job search or new job. You could ask about a project you knew they were involved in. You can mention that you saw the company in the news recently.

Respect

Follow-up with contacts and keep in touch with them occasionally, but don't overdo it. If you are in contact too frequently or your contact with them is always lengthy or demanding, they will get sick of you.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

When the interviewee comes out to meet you, introduce yourself and shake hands. Thank them for their willingness to meet with you, and reemphasize that you are there to gather information about the career field.

Below are some typical informational interview questions. Select 10-12 that will be most useful to you or develop questions of your own.

No matter what questions you ask, respect their schedule by sticking to the allotted time. Keep the meeting conversational and friendly. Don't come off sounding like you're there for a job interview, and do focus on your contact's job and career field.

- What is your job like? A typical day? Week? What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job? How much variety is there from day to day?
- How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
- How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
- Does your work relate to any experiences or studies you had in college?
- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
- How did you prepare for this work? If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way to facilitate entry?
- Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
- What were the keys to your career advancement?
- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- How does your company differ from its competitors?
- Why do customers choose this company?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- Is there a philosophy of the company or organization and, if so, what is it? (service or product oriented?)
- What is the average length of time an employee stays with the company?
- What are the biggest satisfactions and dissatisfactions in this field? Is this typical in the field?
- What are the major rewards besides extrinsic rewards such as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc.?
- What are the greatest pressures, problems, or frustrations in the work?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- Are there busy and slow times or is the work fairly constant?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What obligations does your employer place have on you outside of the ordinary work week? Are there other things you are expected to do outside work hours?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your occupation?
- Are there organizations you are expected to join?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions? What are some related occupations?
- What are the different settings in which people in this occupation may work (educational institutions, businesses, etc.)?
- What are the different salary ranges for a person with my (experience/skills/specific title) in this field?
- What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- What other jobs can you get with the same background?
- Is there flexibility related to dress, work hours, vacation schedule, etc.?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation? How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your occupational field? How much demand is there for people in this occupation? How rapidly is the field growing?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?

- What skills are most important to be successful in your job? How did you learn these skills?
- How can I evaluate whether or not I have the necessary skills for a position such as yours?
- How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
- What are the educational requirements for this job? Other required credentials or licenses?
- What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field? Is graduate school recommended? An MBA? Does the company encourage and pay for employee graduate degrees?
- How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?
- How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
- These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits and values):_____. Where would they fit in this field? In which other related fields might they be helpful?
- Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field/job? Are there any written materials you suggest I read? Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more?
- Do you have any special word of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
- What are the important industry "key words" or "buzz words" to include in a resume or cover letter?

Closing the Interview

- Did I leave out any important questions that would be helpful in learning about the job or occupation?
- [If you feel comfortable and it seems appropriate:] Would you mind taking a look at my resume?
- Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- Can you suggest others who may be valuable sources of information?

Questions for Students or Career Changers

- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- What kinds of courses are most valuable in order to gain skills necessary for success in this occupation? (Distinguish between courses which are desirable and those which are indispensable.)
- What educational program is recommended as preparation?
- What special advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?
- What experiences would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- What courses were the most valuable to you in your work? What would you recommend for me?
- What are the employment prospects in this geographic area? Where are the best employment prospects?

MAKING NEW NETWORKING CONTACTS

- You can reach out to people to make new contacts and possibly set up informational interviews (please see next section) to learn more about the industry, company or specific jobs.
- Make contact with people by cold-calling them
- Discover people to contact in the phone book, in company directories (online or at the company), on websites, and through professional organizations
- Send letters to authors of trade journals

COLD CALLING TIPS

- Ask if this is a good time
- Try not to call between the busiest hours. Peak hours tend to be from 11-12 and 1-3. The best time to call is in the morning, preferably from 9-10 a.m. or 3:45 or later. You can try earlier, but some office hours do not start until 9 a.m. Also try from 12-1 since some people will take their lunch at 1 p.m.
- Keep the control in your hands. Many people say, “I left a message and they never got back to me.” So, don’t leave a message! If the person you want is not there, call again later. If you get a receptionist or secretary, ask when would be a good time to call back.
- Make sure your target speech is prepared and have a script for asking for the informational interview. Be assertive and confident. Be prepared with questions in case they allow you to ask on the spot.
- People may try to “object” to speaking with you in anticipation that you are looking for a job. Here are a few things to try:

They say, “I’m too busy.”

You say, “This will only take a moment. I only need 15-30 minutes of your time. I was hoping you could give me your advice about the field (getting into the field, etc.) I could come anytime or we could schedule a phone meeting. Is there a time that would be convenient for you?” If they cannot meet with you, ask if they have a colleague they could refer you to speak with about _____.

They say, “We’re not hiring.”

You say, “That’s okay. I know you know a lot of people in the field. I just want to know your advice and any ideas for leads or people you can refer me to. This will only take a moment.”

For more scripts, please see Donald Asher’s *Overnight Job Change*.

- Thank them for their time and the information.

SAMPLE COLD CALLING SCRIPTS

Good morning, Mr. Smith. My name is Jess White. How are you this morning? I am a senior at Drexel University and am currently researching careers in marketing and advertising. I am trying to learn about the industry and how to get into the business. I was hoping I could make an appointment to meet with you to get your advice and suggestions. I would only need 20 to 30 minutes of your time. Would you be able to squeeze me into your schedule sometime over the next few weeks? I would greatly appreciate it.

Good morning, Ms. Lin. My name is Sasha Davis and I am calling on the recommendation of a mutual acquaintance, Kennedy Winkel. I told her that I want to talk to people working in management positions in large companies to learn about how to get into business and management, and Kennedy suggested I call you because you have been so successful in your career (or “since you have considerable experience in _____”). Would you be able to spare me 20 to 30 minutes in the next couple of weeks to answer a few questions?

Good morning, Ms. Lin. My name is Sasha Davis and I am calling on the recommendation of _____. S/he told me to call you after I told him/her that I needed to talk to as many people as possible that work in the field of finance to determine if I really want to pursue a career in this area. Would you be able to meet with me for 20 to 30 minutes to answer a few questions I have about the industry? ... When would be a good time for you?

NETWORKING ON THE WEB

Advantages

- There are many discussion groups, mailing lists, and community forums, many industry-specific ones.
- You can make contacts that can lead to a formal meeting
- You can be very involved, or choose to stand back
- Many recruiters peruse the lists or groups to find job candidates

Disadvantages

- You cannot establish a true, personal relationship online
- Impressions are made from internet contact and behavior, too. Be professional
- Your personality cannot be seen
- No one can hear you, so what you type can sometimes be misunderstood

E-Networking Sites

- **LinkedIn-** <http://www.linkedin.com> (recommended)
- **Doostang-** <http://www.doostang.com>
- **Plaxo-** <http://www.plaxo.com>
- **Company of Friends-**<http://www.fastcompany.com/cof>

ANNOUNCEMENT LETTER/EMAIL FOR NETWORKING

Send an Announcement Letter/Email to Everyone You Know

- You may want more than one kind of letter or email for different kinds of contacts. For example, you may want one for family and friends that is a little more personal and a very brief and professional one for professors and business contacts.
- The purpose of the letter or email is to inform everyone that you will be graduating, tell them what your goal is (i.e. types of jobs you will be looking for or companies you are interested in) and enlist their help. Ask if they know anyone in the industry, job title, or specific companies that you could learn from. Send the letter or email well before graduation so you have time to meet new people, we suggest September/October (for May graduation). If you send it during the Thanksgiving to Christmas holidays, many people will be out of the office or will forget about it, which won't help you. Although you can use the same letter or email template, individualize the greeting line, and address the letter or email to each person.

EXAMPLE OF AN ANNOUNCEMENT LETTER/EMAIL

Date

Dear (Name of Individual):

I hope that you are doing well and having a wonderful summer. I am writing you a quick note regarding my upcoming graduation in June 2009. I will be completing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree with a concentration in marketing. I am in the process of beginning my job search and thought you may have some valuable advice and suggestions for me.

I am focusing my search in the interactive marketing industry, specially the web site optimization area. I am looking to make connections with mid-sized online marketing firms such as Avenue A/Razorfish, OurBizSpace, and Buildtelligence. In addition, I am seeking opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry within their marketing and strategic intelligence departments. I am open to relocation and will be conducting my search in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Chicago.

As part of my job search strategy, I am planning to conduct informational interviews with professionals in my areas of interest (marketing and advertising). If you know someone that could assist me in my search, I would greatly appreciate a referral. I am attaching my resume for your review and for possible referral.

Thank you in advance for any advice you have as well as any contacts you are able to suggest. Please send me an update on any news with you; I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name

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