

Guide to Networking

What is networking?

“Networking” is just another way of saying “building a connection”. Specifically, you are building and maintaining professional connections with people who can help you learn about potential job openings, introduce you to hiring managers, and provide recommendations or referrals.

Networking is considered one of the most effective ways to find a job, as many job openings are filled through referrals and word-of-mouth. The primary goal of networking is to build long-lasting professional relationships that are mutually beneficial for all parties involved.

What are the benefits of networking?

- Forming relationships with other professionals in similar careers
- Sharing information that is relevant to a particular industry or career
- Learning about organizations or fields that interest you
- Broadening awareness of current trends in a particular industry
- Staying up-to-date on job openings in a field or industry

Where do I network?

Networking doesn’t necessarily mean going to events and handing out business cards. There are lots of ways to network, and you can find the way that works best for you. Some different modes of networking are:

- Events, e.g. career fairs or employer info sessions
- One-on-one conversations, e.g. informational interviews
- Professional organizations (online or in-person)
- Alumni organizations
- Affinity groups or clubs
- LinkedIn

The seven steps of networking

Identify Your Target Audience and Goals

Start by identifying the individuals or groups who are doing something that you find interesting, or can help you in your job search. These may include friends and family, current and former colleagues, faculty, alumni, industry associations, and professional organizations.

Craft Your Elevator Pitch

Develop a brief and compelling summary that you can use to introduce yourself. It should include your educational background, any relevant skills or experiences, and what you’re currently looking for (e.g. a job, internship, etc).

Leverage Social Media

Use platforms like LinkedIn to expand your network and connect with professionals in your field. Make sure your profile is up-to-date and professional. LinkedIn lets you research target companies, people, and jobs. It provides a way to help you stay connected with colleagues, and is especially helpful in conducting out-of-state and out-of-country job searches.

Attend Networking Events

You can make connections with employers by attending campus events such as employer information sessions, career fairs, and even in classes. Look for networking events in your area. Be prepared to engage in conversations and follow up with individuals who you want to connect with further.

Conduct Informational Interviews

Reach out to professionals in your field through your contacts, professional organizations, or LinkedIn and ask to do an informational interview. These are short meetings where you can learn about their career paths, industry trends, and potential job openings. Be respectful of their time and come prepared with thoughtful questions. The APHC has a detailed [guide to informational interviewing](#) that includes a list of people you can reach out to.

Follow Up and Maintain the Connection

After making a new contact, be sure to follow up with a personalized email or LinkedIn message thanking them for their time and expressing your interest in keeping in touch. This is probably the most important step and the one that most people skip. Remember: these are relationships that you are investing in for the long-term. You must stay consistent in your networking efforts to reap the benefits of building professional connections.

Figure out how you can contribute to the relationship

Base your networking efforts on a balance of give and take. Make sure you aren't simply asking your network for favors or jobs. Rather, do what you can to support your network's professional efforts and it's likely that they will do the same for you. Listen when the other person is talking and become genuinely interested in what they have to say.

It's important to keep in mind that networking isn't about instant professional connections that will benefit your career. You should focus on making genuine connections with like-minded people rather than only connecting with people who can give you something.

Sources

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