

CHAPTER ONE

Networking

Meeting people and finding out how you can help them or they can help you is networking

Do's

- Prepare ahead by asking yourself; who do you want to meet and what you would like to achieve from the networking event?
- Know yourself, what benefits you offer, and what you want.
- Be presentable!
- Be prepared to exchange business cards.
- Have copies of your résumé in your car or briefcase.
- Be a volunteer. It is an excellent way to increase your network.
- Develop a system for organizing your network contacts.
- Have a mentor, to guide you in preparing for the job search and ultimately securing a job.
- Conduct informational interviews. This is considered by many to be the best networking technique.
- Ask questions because most people love to talk about what they do, so take the opportunity to listen and learn.
- Present your thoughts and ideas clearly.
- Make the effort to follow up promptly after meeting a new contact. Drop him or her a note or an email within the same day, if possible, to make a first impression that lasts.
- Thank the person who gave you a referral.

Don'ts

- Quantity is not the reason for choosing a networking group, but, rather understanding that the quality of contacts the group can offer you is what counts.
- Do not hand out your business card before you have a conversation with the contact. Get to know them first.
- Refrain from sharing your opinions until you have established rapport with your new contact.
- Attempt not to be shy! Be responsive to compliments that are given by saying "Thank You."
- Don't be in a hurry to see results. Patience is a virtue with new contacts. It may take some time before a person becomes comfortable in giving you a referral.
- Never be afraid to ask for help. Most people are happy to provide assistance and advice with your job search.
- Do not stop networking even after you have found a job. You may need your network contacts again.

Working a Room

- Mix, mingle, and circulate.
- Do not head for the drink & food table first.
- Do not come to the event overly hungry.
- Eat small amounts of food.
- Keep your drink in the left hand.
- Avoid gestures of affection.
- Step back to avoid hugs.
- Shake hands with everyone.
- Do not approach 2 people in a deep conversation.
- Approach groups of 3 or more.
- Approach a single person. (Look for the white knuckles)
- When getting refreshments, don't block the table or an entrance.
- Your goal should be to make at least 5 new acquaintances.
- Always thank your host and hostess before leaving.

Conversational Skills:

A Good Rule to Go By: ASK - LISTEN - COMMENT

Rules of Conversation

- Greet & introduce yourself.
- When you don't know where to begin, look for common ground.
- Don't try to do all the talking.
- Keep the conversation alive by asking good questions.
- Don't offend others, be tactful and polite.
- When others are talking, be a good listener.
- Don't fail to comment on what has been said.
- Never whisper in front of others.
- Don't walk away from a group or conversation without giving a closing comment or farewell greeting.

If a Conversation Leads to an Undesirable Subject

- If someone asks you something that you do not wish to answer, then don't!
- Change the subject.
- Tell the person that you would rather not talk about this.
- Draw someone else to join in and change the subject.
- If they do not get the hint, walk away.

If someone gives you a compliment, receive it graciously with a smile and a return comment like, "How nice of you to say that, Thank You."

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Whether you are a freshman, sophomore, or junior who has not yet decided on a career path, or a senior who is still in the planning stage of the job search, it is always a good idea to do some creative research on career options. A particularly helpful avenue for exploration is called **Informational Interviewing**. Different from a job interview, the informational interview is an interview that you initiate – you ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information, not to get a job. The goal of informational interviewing is to generate more information about a particular career path, for the purpose of personal career development and planning.

You will gain your most valuable information about jobs by interviewing the people who do them. As in job interviews, you write and/or call the individual you would like to interview ahead of time, and arrange an appointment. While you may experience a pang of fear at the thought of talking to a stranger about his/her job, you will find that most people are more than willing to talk to an interested student about what they do. You must, however, find the courage and initiative to take the first step.

In informational interviewing, make it clear that you are looking for information about jobs, and that you do not expect the person you are interviewing to facilitate your actual job search. By asking for information and advice, you take the pressure off of the person you are interviewing. You may interview in order to find out what a particular job is like, to analyze the typical career path of a profession, or discover how or where it is done.

WHY WOULD YOU CONDUCT AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

- To explore careers and clarify your career goal
- To discover employment opportunities that are not advertised
- To expand your professional network
- To build confidence for your job interviews
- To access the most up-to-date career information
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW PROCESS

Identify the occupation or industry you wish to learn about

- Assess your own interests, abilities, values and skills.
- Evaluate labor conditions and trends to identify the best fields to research.
- Research the career field(s) you have identified.

Identify people to interview

- Use your own personal contacts who might lead you to people who are in the field(s) you are interested in.
- Visit a company's website to find possible contacts.
- Visit the Offices of Strengths and Vocation for possible contacts.
- Check out the current trends found in newspaper and magazine articles.

Prepare for the interview

- Prepare a short introduction about yourself prior to making the contact.
- Be prepared to share the purpose for the interview.
- Prepare questions that are open-ended.

Arrange the interview

- Make contact by phone or email.
- Practice what you will say prior to making the contact.
- Let him or her know how you got their name.
- Let the person know that you are after information not a job.
- Ask for a convenient time to have a meeting and express how long it would be.
- You may find yourself doing the interview on the phone during the initial contact so be prepared with questions.

Conducting the interview

- Dress professionally as if going to a job interview. Have your resume with you but do not offer it unless asked by the interviewee.
- Don't be late!
- Express your appreciation for the meeting and remind them that you are not asking for a job.
- It is important that you have a short presentation of who you are prepared.
- While you will be directing the interview, be sure to allow it to flow naturally with the interviewee doing most of the talking.
- Always begin the interview with the questions you want answered the most. You never know how the interview will go and you may run out of time to ask all of your questions.
- Be very attentive and respectful.
- Make sure that the interview goes only as long as previously agreed upon. If the interviewee wishes to continue the interview do so – but be careful not to stay too long.
- You may find the interviewee genuinely interested in your future plans so be prepared for the interview change in scope at times. This does not mean that you are being interviewed for a job – yet, you may be making a good first impression and you may find this person will be an excellent resource in the future.
- It is important to ask for permission to contact him or her with further questions you might have in the future.
- It is also important that you ask for names of people that you might want to contact to conduct additional informational interviews.

What to do after the interview?

- It is vital that you write down as much as you can remember about what was said during the interview. What recommendations and advice was provided? What did you feel was most important information that came out of the interview that requires more research? Did the information you gathered meet your expectations related to your career goals?
- You must send a thank-you note within two days.
- It is important that you keep in touch with this contact, especially if you felt the interview went well. Be sure to let them know that you did some follow-up as it pertains to their advice. Down the road this contact could prove very important!

Sample Questions to Ask During an Informational Interview

You will not have time to ask all of the questions that you will want to ask the interviewee. Remember to focus on the ones you feel will be most useful to you personally. Pick 10-15 to use as a guideline but leave room for the possibility that other questions will develop from your conversation.

- What is your job like?
- Why 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?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- What things did you do before you entered this occupation?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program? 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?
- 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?
- From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
- What are the major frustrations of this job?
- What are the educational requirements for this job? What other types of credentials or licenses are required? What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or using similar skills? What other kinds of organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here? Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?
- What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- What special advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for a position in this field?