



Networking from Scratch

What is Networking?

Networking is an intentional process of fostering relationships among individuals to pass along information. This information, which comes in numerous forms including recommendations, introductions, job leads and advice is typically passed from person to person by way of phone, email or face-to-face conversations. As a result, networking occurs every day!

Networking is all about creating opportunities as well as developing, fostering and maintaining relationships. It is these relationships that form one's network—a group of people connected to one by multiple ways including: occupation, volunteer work, courses, friends, family, etc. An individual's network is similar to that of a web with he or she being its center.

Where does Networking Occur?

Networking occurs everywhere. It can be a simple conversation while waiting in line to go to the movies or it can take place at the annual Alumni Career Dinner which is sponsored every spring by Alumni Relations and Career Services. Because networking happens everywhere, don't overlook less formal occasions to meet and connect with others.

Why Should I Network?

Networking...

- Leads to the hidden job market, where most jobs are found. While statistics vary, it is believed that up to 80% of jobs are never advertised. These jobs are what make up the hidden job market.
- Allows one to learn the industry's lingo and job titles used in companies of interest.
- Allows one to learn about other organizations that employ individuals with specific qualifications.
- Provides more access to information, people, contacts and resources.
- Creates opportunities for friendships, business and personal relationships.
- Fosters collaborative approaches to getting things accomplished. *For example, two student organizations working independently to accomplish a similar goal may benefit greatly by partnering together and sharing resources.*

With Whom Should I Network?

Everyone is a potential contact.

- *Family*—This includes immediate and extended families. These individuals want you to succeed and will be more than willing to pass along job leads as well as connect you with others.
- *Friends*—Friends and their families are another wonderful group with whom to network. They are easily accessible and can be a wealth of information.
- *College/University Alumni*—In addition to learning about career paths and job leads, alumni often make excellent mentors. Use *GTJC's* Alumni Career Network to identify possible contacts.
- *College/University Faculty*—Professors already have an established network. They often receive announcements regarding job opportunities and can also recommend specific individuals with whom to network. Additionally, they are a fairly easy group with whom to contact.

- *Hiring Authorities*--These individuals are the decision makers. They determine who does and does not get the job. This can be a challenging group with whom to set up meetings.
- *Insiders*--These are professionals working in the industry who do not have the power to make decisions. However, they are people with whom individuals must network. They teach others the ins and the outs of their organization and job. Through these individuals one will learn the inner workings of companies, possible career paths, job titles, etc. All of this information will be helpful during a job search.
- *Centers of Influence*--While these individuals are not necessarily working in the preferred industry, they do know a lot of people. Centers of influence include hairdressers, mechanics, and teachers.
- *Everyone Else*--Anyone else that does not fit into the above categories fits into this one and is considered to be an "everyone else."

How Can I Build My Network?

Attend events that offer some type of networking component. Examples of events include job fairs, alumni dinners, professional conferences, etc. Utilize these opportunities to connect with other professionals.

Consider joining professional organizations. Many organizations offer students the opportunity to join their organization for a lesser fee. Take advantage of this opportunity to join and proceed to become an active member. Becoming involved is an excellent way to network. See Career Service's *Professional Association Guide* for a list of professional associations by major.

Additionally, informational interviews are an excellent way to network and to build contacts. These interviews are initiated by an individual in hopes of learning more about an occupation, industry or organization. They are however, not an opportunity to ask for a job. For additional information about informational interviews, please see our "*Informational Interview and Networking Questions*" guide found at: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5740.htm>

You can also log into Career Services' Alumni Career Network. This online database contains hundreds of alumni who have volunteered to talk to students and share advice about their career fields. You can get advice about the job search process, an insider's perspective on a career field or company, information about internship and volunteer options, and suggestions for things to do while you are still in college to make yourself more marketable and knowledgeable about the world of work

What Else Should I Know About Networking?

Remember that networking is a two-way street. Consider the numerous assets you bring to relationships and ways that you can help others. Possible ways include: teaching a skill, providing feedback, making recommendations, lending support to other's activities, contributing an objective perspective and showing appreciation. This is just a sampling of all that individuals bring to a networking relationship.

Helpful Hints

- Create some type of system to keep track of all of your contacts. An organized system will make it easier to find contacts and their information and for you to follow up on all leads.
- Successful networking requires time and commitment.
- When attending a business function or professional event, dress and act professionally. Even if not job hunting, one must establish a professional image with a network.
- Show genuine interest in others.
- Pay it forward—pass names along to others, facilitate introductions, make references, etc. Others will appreciate your efforts. Networking is not a one-way street.
- Ask for referrals. It never hurts to contact other professionals doing what you want to do. Just remember to ask original contact if it is OK to use his or her name when contacting the referral.

- Smile when meeting people and avoid closed body language.
- Keep moving along. Networking can take time, so don't become discouraged and don't expect an immediate response or answer.
- Know the strengths of your network and see how they might be able to help in other ways. Some may offer support, advice, information or connect you with others.
- Take advice in the spirit it was intended.

Resources Offered by Career Services

- Alumni Career Network (ACN) an online database of alumni willing to assist current students and fellow alums. ACN is housed on GTJC. For more information go to: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5684.htm>
- Additional Information about networking can be found on Career Service's web page at: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5988.htm>.
- Career Services Professional Association Guide can be found at: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/5740.htm>
- *Networking for Job Search and Career Success*, L. Michelle Tullier, Ph.D.
- *Networking for Novices: The Basics Made Easy in 20 Simple Steps*, Susan Shelly.
- *Networking From Scratch: A College Student's Guide to Building Contacts*, Donald Asher, The University of Tennessee Career Services

Reference

Information for this guide was adapted from: Cooperative Education & Internship Association (CEIA). (2002). *Developing Personal Networks*. Retrieved March 10, 2008 from: <http://www.ceiainc.org/membership/membersonly/Networking.doc>