How to Network

What is networking?

By now, you have probably heard the phrase "It's not what you know, it's who you know." While what you know is important, who you know is crucial when it comes to obtaining a job and advancing your career. That's where networking comes in. Networking refers to developing and maintaining contacts and connections with people who might be helpful to you and your career. Most of us network everyday as we exchange ideas, advice, contacts and referrals with others.

Why is networking important?

A recent survey for the Department of Labor verified that networking accounts for 69% of all annual hires. Networking is a key component of every job search. It is an opportunity to improve communication skills, learn about your field of interest, build relationships with professionals in your field and possibly be referred for a job. If you can get connected with a contact at the company you will be interviewing with, it can certainly give you an edge and help you be better prepared.

Who is in my network?

Your network is anyone and everyone. Think friends, family, neighbors, professionals in your field, clients, co-workers, club and association members, volunteer groups, acquaintances, mentors, professors and classmates. Even your neighborhood dry cleaner could have a brother in accounting that is looking to hire an associate at his firm. Get the picture?

How can I build my network?

- **Take Advantage**: Every encounter both personal and professional is a chance to network.
- **Be Assertive**: Contact people even if you do not know them well. Consider using an email or telephone call to say, "Ashley Moore suggested that I contact you for advice (information) on the field of...
- **Be Involved**: Participate in professional and social activities and attend on and off-campus events. For example, at Brooklyn College attend events sponsored by academic departments, the Magner Center and Student Affairs/Student Organizations. This will increase your chances of meeting people. You never know what an encounter may lead to.
- **Get a BC Mentor**: Join the Brooklyn College Alumni Mentor Program to get paired with a BC alum currently working in the career you wish to pursue. This is your chance to network and get career related information.
- **Alumni Associations**: Join the Brooklyn College Alumni Association, your junior high, high school or any other organized alumni association for programs you participated in (summer camp, after school, community organization).
- **Ask for an Informational Interview**: From people in field or company of interest. Vault details how to have a productive informational interview.
- **Be Proactive**: Building your network is on-going, not just when you need something. **Friends, Family, Supervisors, Co-Workers, Coaches and Acquaintances** - chat with these people casually (on the train, in the supermarket, social gatherings, etc.). Most people enjoy talking about the work they do.
- **Professor and other Faculty Members**: can provide a wealth of information about their encounters through their research or community involvement.
- **Don’t Overlook the Web**: Use the Internet to find alumni and other professional contacts
  - Do a Google search to find professional associations and organizations in your field. Become a member and attend its conferences and events.
  - Use Google to find alumni and other professionals in your areas of interest.
  - Utilize Facebook, meetup and LinkedIn to proactively reconnect with old acquaintances or make new contacts.
    - LinkedIn.com is a free professional network with over 100 million members that helps you search for job opportunities and connect with past and present colleagues as well as alumni. Review our Using LinkedIn Effectively Resources
    - Meetup is the world's largest network of local groups, with over 2,000 groups getting together in local communities each day.
  - You can use Twitter as your ongoing portfolio as well. Tweet about interesting projects you are working on.

What are some of the do’s and don’ts of networking?

- **Face time**: While phone calls and email are both useful ways to network, there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction.
- **Never Stop Networking**: Networking is useful not only to get a job, but even while you have a job. Ideally, you want to network before you need something.
- **Name Drop**: When applicable, name drop or have someone else contact the person for you.
- **Consider it an Investment**: Know that networking takes time and effort. Think of your network as an investment, where the benefits outweigh the costs.
- **Conquer your Fears**: Unless you are someone who likes to schmooze, introducing yourself to a complete stranger at a networking event is easier said than done. However, with the right preparation, you will be a pro in no time.

How do I maintain my network?

- **Contact Lists**: Organization is key. Every time you get a new business card add it to your address book or an online spreadsheet. Develop email distribution lists for your different groups of contacts.
- **Show Gratitude**: Be gracious. Write a thank you letter to show your gratitude.
- **Give Back**: Offer to help your network. For example, if a friend sends you a job opportunity that is of no use to you, forward it to members of your network who might be interested.
- **Meet in Person**: Invite members of your network to lunch or drinks from time-to-time.
- **Keep Contact**: Reach out to members of your network individually. A "just wanted to say hi" email/phone call will do the trick. Birthdays, weddings, holidays and major events are also a good time to touch base with your network.

NETWORKING EVENTS TIPS

How do I prepare for networking at an event?

- **Know your Stuff**: For starters, you want to be well informed about the topic before attending the event. Use the internet to research news stories and trends within the profession to use as talking points. Try to get a bio or google the person(s) who will be in attendance.
Prepare an Introduction: The intro should include your name, other additional background information (such as major and graduation date), who you know and your reason for attending the event.

Compose Questions: Come up with a set of questions to ask people you meet (Have you been here before? How long have you been with the company? Have you attended similar events? Where do you work/what do you do?)

Dress and Act the Part: In general, you can expect to wear business casual attire at a networking event.

Business Cards: Keep business cards with you. If you don’t have any, get some made at Staples, Office Depot or VistaPrint.com. Remember to ask every person you chat with for their business card as well.

What to do at the Event?

- Don’t be Shy: Introduce yourself.
- Meet and Greet: Make a goal to meet 2-3 people (quality versus quantity)
- Be Engaging: Listen, ask questions and show interest in what they are saying.
- Wrapping Up: Thank them, get their business card and ask when is a good time to follow up/contact them.

What to do After the Event?

- Follow up when they told you or within 2-3 days of meeting them if not specified.
- If they do not respond the first time, follow up one more time.
- Make sure to thank them for their assistance/information provided. Always show gratitude.

Where do I go for more help with networking?

- How to Network for a Job Search:
- College Fashion: What to Wear to a Networking Event:
- Tips on Networking for Shy People:
- Informational Interviews