



How to: Professionally NETWORK

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WHAT IS NETWORKING?

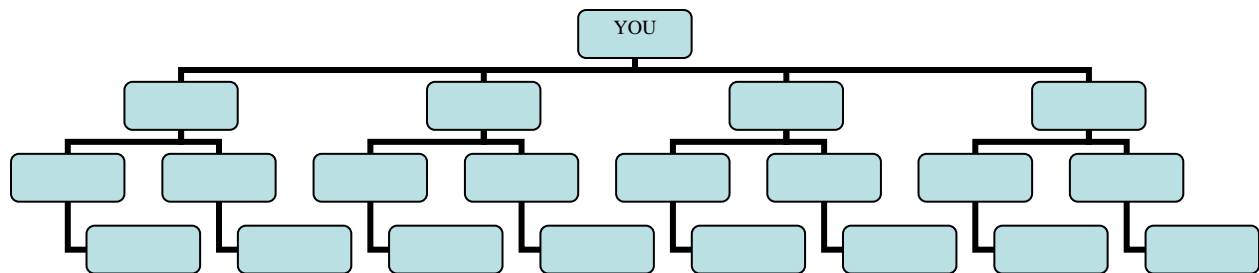
By definition it means to **develop contacts** and **exchange information** with other people for purposes of developing business or expanding one’s career opportunities. During your day, you probably network without even knowing it. For instance, let’s say you need a ride home to New Jersey for the weekend and you ask another friend if they know anyone who lives in Jersey - you are networking! Maybe you need a part-time job and you ask your friend, a Bertucci’s employee, who to contact about working there; you are networking!

Networking is tapping into your connections for helpful information or advice.

If done successfully, networking can be the most effective career exploration and job search tool.

To begin networking you must identify **who can offer** assistance when it comes to seeking **career related advice**. For instance, it may be a parent, a friend, a co-worker, a roommate’s parent, a faculty member or other individuals you know from your social, work, or educational environment. The purpose of connecting with each person is to see if these individuals can share information and advice in regards to your field of interest as well as refer you to a second person that can provide additional insights. If possible, your second contact can refer you to a third contact who can also provide career related information. This process in networking is called the “Multiplier Effect”.

Let’s say to start, you talked to four people and then those four people each referred you to two people (total of 8). You have now increased your network to twelve people and if the other eight people each referred you to one person you have now increased your network to 20 people. These 20 individuals now know about your career interests and goals and in turn you have hopefully learned about your field of interest as well as opened up the hidden job market (those employment opportunities that are not known to the general public). When searching for a job, it is helpful when a number of people know that you are looking because they too can keep their eyes and ears open for opportunities you might be interested in.



You have the ability to create your own network but it’s going to require some creativity and determination to do so. You have to be willing to put in the effort because the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. The next few pages will outline some tips on how to build your network and set up meetings with potential contacts.

Networking is usually listed as the number one way people find a job.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN NETWORKING

1. **IDENTIFY: Information you are looking for** - Would you like to know information about a specific position or perhaps information about a particular field of interest? You'll need to be able to tell the person you are speaking with what you are looking for.
2. **IDENTIFY: People who can help you** – Research and think of people who are doing what you want to do. Are there any relatives, friends or neighbors who work in the field or could refer you to someone who could help you? Also talk to your professors, past employers, and university administrators to see if they know individuals that you could talk to.
3. **IDENTIFY: Activities/organizations (on and off campus) you belong to** – Are there people associated with these activities that could be of assistance to you in building your network? They can be a great link to resources and could be a trustworthy source of information.
4. **IDENTIFY: New ways to build your network** – Ask the Career Center about talking with alumni, look for professional organizations related to your field of interest, and check geographic directories (i.e. The Chamber of Commerce).
5. **IDENTIFY: Confidence** – Don't be afraid to talk to people about your interests, even people you meet for the first time at a social gathering or even on a plane/train. You never know what a chance meeting can bring. It's okay to ask questions such as “What do you do for a living?” or “What line of work are you involved in?”

MEETING NEW PEOPLE

One of the great things about your network is that it's always growing. As you meet new people and experience new things, you are collecting more information and contacts which can be helpful in the future. If you're looking for specific information and your current network does not have a connection to that knowledge, there are numerous ways to expand your horizons and learn. A great way to meet new people is through a practice called “**Informational Interviewing**.” An informational interview is **a conversation where you have the chance to ask someone else questions about their profession, career path, and more**. It is common in the working world to conduct informational interviews with individuals whom currently have jobs you think may be a fit for you. There are several ways to reach out to new people and get started, including Villanova resources like the NovaNetwork and Career Connections, two databases of alumni for students to use. Talk with a career counselor to figure out how to best utilize these resources and tap into new people who could be a part of your network.

WHAT TYPE OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

After you have identified the reasons why you are seeking information and whom to contact, it's a good idea to formulate some questions to ask the people you will be speaking with. Below are some suggested questions:

- What is your educational and professional background?
- How did you prepare yourself for this profession?
- What do you like/dislike about your job and why?
- What types of companies/organizations might employ someone to do this type of work?
- How did you decide to get into the field and what steps did you take to enter the field?
- What should I do to best prepare myself for a job in this field?
- What suggestions do you have for someone wishing to enter this field?
- What skills and background are needed to get into this field?
- What is the salary range for a person in this field?
- What personal qualities do you feel are most important in your work and why?

- What are the tasks you do in a typical workday and could you describe them?
- What types of difficult issues/stress do you experience on the job?
- What are the most significant changes facing your field/organization?
- What are the trends/issues to be aware of in the field?
- What is the job outlook in this field?
- Knowing what you know about your field, would you go into it again? If you weren't doing this what other careers would you pursue?
- What related occupations might I investigate?
- Is advanced education beneficial or required in this field?
- What qualities would one need to possess to do well in this profession?
- Are there professional publications or organizations that I should become familiar with?
- Is there anyone else that you could recommend that would be beneficial for me to speak with? May I use your name in contacting this person?

Always be sure to ask if the person can recommend additional people for you to talk to! This is one of the most important questions and the one that will provide you with further contacts.

Also, while all of these questions are good, be sure to **have a conversation with the person**. Tell the person about yourself – interests, goals, where you're from, etc. If while asking a question, the person mentions something of interest to you or something that you have in common, feel free to comment about it or inquire further. For example, if the person comments that work varies from day to day in the role, you could say, "I'm glad to hear that there is a lot of variety in your work. I like having different tasks to work on each day."

As opposed to asking question after question, treat the interview more like a conversation. It will help to make the experience more relaxing.

SETTING UP THE MEETING

If you have completed the above steps, you are now ready to set up your networking meetings or informational interviews. Depending on your location and your contact's location, the interview may have to be conducted over the phone or via e-mail as opposed to in person. Just be sure to discuss these options with your contact. If your contact is in New York City and you are here in Villanova but will be in NYC in the next week or two, you can ask if the person has time to meet then. Below are some guidelines for setting up an informational interview either by phone or mail.

BY PHONE:

When contacting an individual by phone, be sure to have an idea of what you will say once you have reached the person. It may be helpful to have some notes in front of you so that you don't lose track of what you are going to say. (Tip: Smile before and during the call – it will help you to sound friendlier and less nervous.)

- Tell the person who you are and why you are calling
- If someone suggested that you contact this person, be sure to mention that person's name
- Ask if the person would be willing to meet for an informational interview

For example:

Hello Mr. Kelly my name is _____ and I am a Villanova University student considering a career in _____. I am calling at the suggestion of (person's name who referred you). He/she thought you might be a good person from whom to seek some ideas and advice about _____. I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me for about 20 to 30 minutes for an informational interview so I can learn more about your position as a _____ ?

Remember:

- It is okay to set up an informational interview as a phone call.
- Ask the person where and when would be the most convenient place to meet you.
- Confirm the date, time and place that you will be meeting before you end the call.
- Say “Thank you” and that you are looking forward to meeting.

In some cases, the person you contact might say there is time to talk with you at that time and suggest you could speak then. It’s up to you – if you are going to proceed with the interview, make sure you feel confident enough in going ahead with the interview at that time. This is one reason why it is important to have your list of questions ready and with you. If you do not feel prepared, you can also say that at this time you were simply calling to set up a time that you can either meet in person or talk over the phone as you are also trying to set up meetings with other individuals. Then see if there is another time that the both of you can meet or talk over the phone.

BY SNAIL MAIL OR E-MAIL:

Whether sending a letter or e-mail first, both allow you to introduce yourself to the contact and explain why you are writing (See Sample A). You can also enclose or attach your resume so that the person can learn more about you. Sending a letter or e-mail also allows the person some time to consider your request. It is usually best to follow the letter or e-mail with a phone call about a week or two after the letter is written.

When you contact the person to follow up, you can start the call in the following way:

Hello Mr. Kelly. My name is _____ and I am a student at Villanova University. I am calling to follow up on my recent letter/e-mail requesting about a half hour of your time to learn more about your position as _____. Have you received my letter?

Once the person recognizes your name, you can proceed with a discussion as to determine the possibility of a meeting and when it might be a good time to do so. (Follow the guidelines listed above)

THE INTERVIEW

First and foremost please be sure that you are on time whether you are meeting in person or calling the contact. When the interview takes place, remember you are the person conducting the interview. Here are some guidelines for the interview:

- You lead the meeting and ask the questions such as the ones provided in this guide
- You watch the clock to make sure you do not go over the 30 minute time you had requested
- When 30 minutes is approaching, you can say the following: “Our 30 minutes are approaching and I know you are busy so I’ll end with this last question.....”
- If the contact says it is okay to stay longer then that is fine. But if not, start to close the conversation by thanking the person for their time and mention how valuable this opportunity was.

The overall goal of the interview is to learn about the person’s job, career path, field of work, and organization as well as share information about yourself and your career goals. If the person you are interviewing asks how to be of assistance to you as you explore career options, it is okay to ask for advice on identifying summer internships or job opportunities or to ask for comments on your resume. However, **IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO ASK FOR A JOB.** Asking for a job can be the fastest way of losing a networking contact.

FOLLOW-UP

Always follow-up your interview with a **THANK YOU LETTER** by letting the contact know how much you appreciated the time spent with you and the information shared. If the contact mentioned something that really caught your attention, you can say how valuable that piece of information was to you. This is a nice way of letting the contact know that you connected with what was said.

Communication is the key to successful networking so it is important to report to your contact when you follow the advice given, make contact with someone to whom you were referred, or when you are successful in obtaining a job or internship. The people you meet with will enjoy hearing how they were able to help you and most likely you'll develop an important relationship where one day you may be able to help your contact.

STAYING ORGANIZED

Throughout this process it is very important to keep yourself organized which is why it is helpful to create a log of all the people you are contacting. Try to create a system that will work best for you. You can create a database in excel or another computer program, keep index cards, or a binder with the information. Below is a suggested format for logging your contacts.

Name :			
Relationship:			
Company :			
Title :			
Address:			
Phone:		Date of first contact:	
Email:		Contacted via: Phone Letter E-mail	
Fax:			
Notes:		Action Taken:	
		Next Step/Follow-up:	

Another Option: if you are networking and collecting business cards, it is a good idea (while the interaction is fresh in your mind) to write some notes on the back of the card – how you met the person, when, and any particular advice they gave.

MEETING NEW PEOPLE: SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking online continues to make meeting people and staying in touch with people as easy as a few clicks of a button on the web. We encourage you to make the most of social media and communicating online, but remember that professionalism counts in digital spaces just as much as meeting in person. One particular site we recommend to use for professional networking is called LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). This social networking site has become a network of choice for employers and professionals everywhere, with many organizations favoring it as a tool for finding new hires. Visit the Career Center's website and read our "Social Media and Job Searching" guide for tips on how to use social networking for professional gain.

ADVICE TO CONSIDER FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

- Keep in mind that whatever you post (pictures, videos, status updates, tweets, links, etc.) will be public. Friends, friends of friends, and people in your networks may have access to this. If you are connected to someone, they will be able to share your information with others.
- Update your information frequently. Got a new internship? Post it. Taking an interesting class? Tell people about it.

- Be cautious when connecting with people without a reason or with those whom you don't know. By connecting with someone online, you are, in some way, endorsing them. If you can't say good things about a connection or vice versa, it might be wise to steer clear of a virtual connection.
- Maintain an awareness of what others are saying and posting about you. For example, on Facebook, you may keep a clean Profile, but if a friend tags an inappropriate picture of you, it will be linked to your account.
- Tell people in your networks about appropriate good news. Share an accomplishment from class or your internship. Compliment someone for doing good work. Avoid posting negative comments, especially about employers, coworkers, and supervisors. These things have a strange way of haunting you. Even if your current employer does not see it, others who do may make an impression of you by these comments.
- Google your name. Be aware of what the top results are. If you can Google a company, they can Google you. The top results on the page will make the first impression.
- Avoid writing publicly about your job search unless it can be public. If your current employer sees this, it may negatively impact your experience at work.
- Know everything about Privacy Policies. Manage your privacy settings regularly. Often times, social media sites change their privacy settings. Keep up to date with this information so you can control who is seeing your information and how much they can see.
- Pick a neutral or professional photo for all of your social media presences. This is the first image employers and others will see if and when they screen you. Put your best face forward.
- Use your discretion and best judgment when giving out your information. Don't upload personal information to websites which seem inappropriate. If it looks questionable, then there may be a reason to question it.

MEETING NEW PEOPLE: WORKING A NETWORKING EVENT

(From: http://www.workz.com/content/view_content.html?section_id=557&content_id=7097)

1. When you arrive at a networking event, avoid gravitating to people you know. You should initially thank the host and then immediately find someone new to introduce yourself to. This will help keep you in the right frame of mind as to why you came.

2. When receiving a card from someone, take a moment to write yourself a note on it such as where you met. If you do this while you're still talking to the person, it will help convey your sense of personal connection.

3. During the course of a conversation, use the other person's first name two or three times. People always like to hear their own name and it will help you to remember it when the discussion is over.

4. Rather than telling a new contact all about yourself, spend your time asking them questions. It's amazing how much you'll learn!

5. After you meet someone for the first time, use the back of their business card to jot a note about something you learned from the conversation and the date and place you met them. Recording the information will give you something to talk to them about the next time you see them.

- 6. Connect with the person you're talking to by tilting your head as you listen to them.** It is an effective body language technique which communicates that you're paying attention to what they're saying.
- 7. When a person is talking to you, be sure to look directly at them.** Giving a person full attention with your eyes will encourage them to share more.
- 8. When giving someone eye contact, remember it's not a "stare-down" contest.** Give the person 3-5 seconds of eye contact and then look away briefly before returning your focus to them again.
- 9. The best location to network is by a high-traffic area such as a main door or near the food.**
- 10. Never approach someone if they are walking towards the restroom or if they have a phone in their hand.** Wait until they have returned to the networking area or put their phone away.
- 11. After the person has shared something with you, ask them another question about what they just said.** This shows that you're paying attention and that you care about what they're telling you.
- 12. Always keep one hand free to allow yourself to shake hands with people.** This means that you shouldn't eat and drink at the same time. Remember, you're there to network, not eat a full-course meal.
- 13. As a way of demonstrating your networking skills, introduce each person you meet to at least one other person.**
- 14. Do not approach two people who are talking, as you may be interrupting an important discussion.**
- 15. Initiate conversation with someone who is standing by themselves.** They'll be happy to have someone to talk to them and, as a result, will many times open up with valuable information.
- 16. When you meet someone for the first time, you have 48 hours to follow up with them before they will completely forget about meeting you.**
- 17. A networking event is not a time to see how many business cards you can acquire.** Rather, it is a time to develop a few relationships that have potential.

SAMPLE TEXT REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

800 Lancaster Avenue
Box 300
Villanova, PA 19085

Ms. Lucy Mullen
NBC/Channel 10
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Dear Ms. Mullen:

I am a sophomore at Villanova University studying Communications and am very interested in learning more about the field of broadcasting. I was speaking with my roommate's father, John Smith, about my interests and he mentioned that you would be a good person to speak with in regards to different opportunities in the field as well as provide insight into other types of activities I should take advantage of while in college. I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me for a 30 minute informational interview to discuss your career path and to learn more about your experiences in broadcasting.

Villanova has provided me with an excellent starting ground, as I am currently involved in the production of our television station, WXVU. This experience has been very beneficial and eye-opening to me, and I would like to learn how I can continue to expand my knowledge of the field. I have enclosed my resume which provides additional detail about my other experiences and skills.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you. I will call you in the next week to discuss this and, hopefully, to set up an appointment with you. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Will D. Cat

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call the Career Center at (610-519-4060) to set up an appointment with a career counselor. A counselor can help you explore your network and discuss the type of information you're hoping to get out of the informational interviews.