

How To Network

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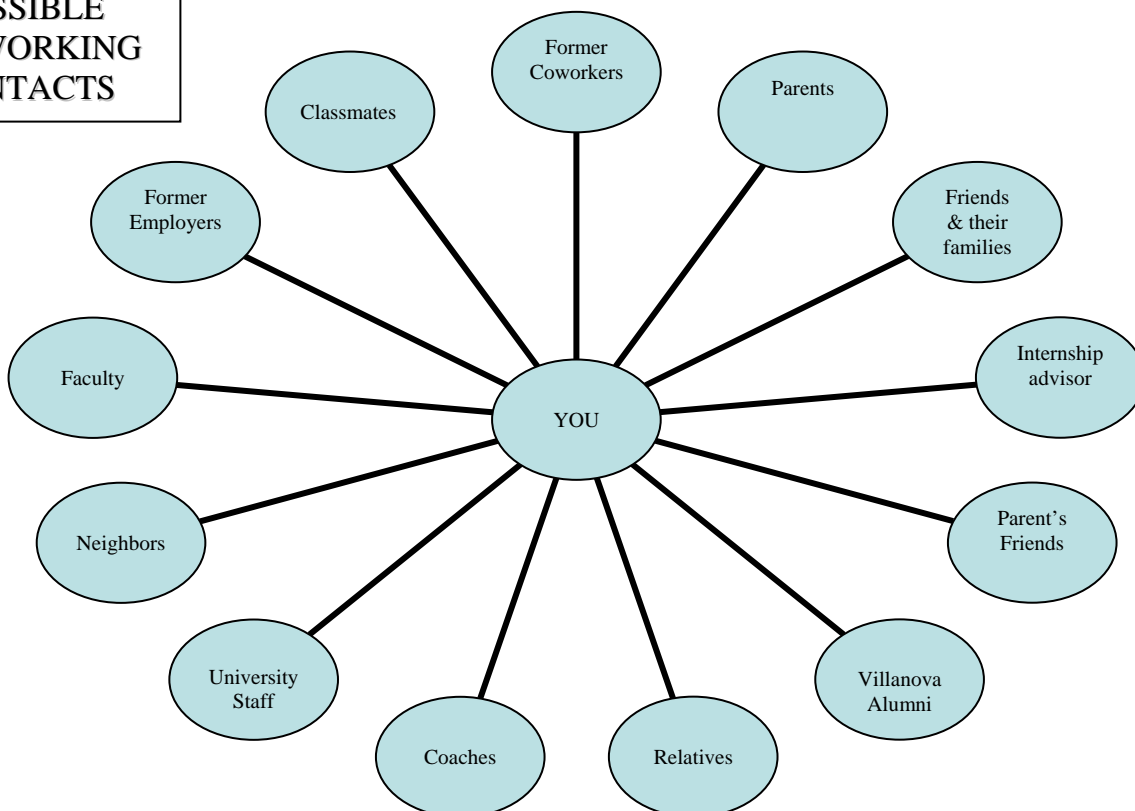
WHAT IS NETWORKING

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! Or if you need a part-time job and want to work in a restaurant you ask your friend who works at Bertucci's if there are openings and who to contact about working there, you are networking!

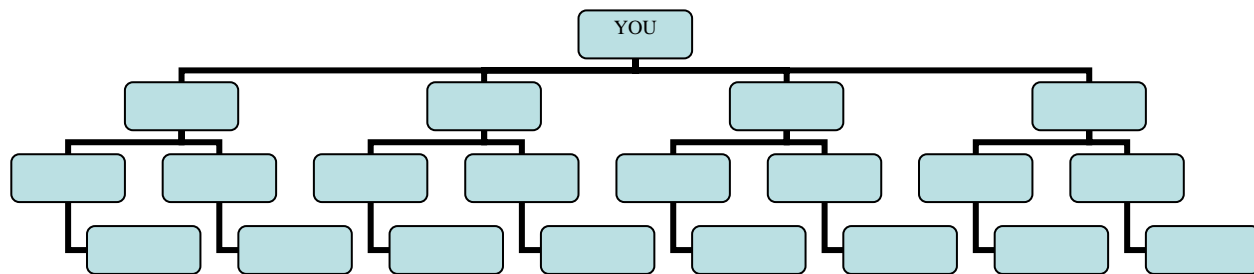
Networking is tapping into your connections for helpful information or advice. If done successfully, networking can be the most effective career exploration and job search tool.

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 in regards** to your **field of interest** as well as **direct/refer** you to a second person that provide additional insights. And if possible, your second contact can direct/refer you to a third contact who too can provide career related information. In networking this process, it's called the "Multiplier Effect".

POSSIBLE NETWORKING CONTACTS



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 definitely 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 what you put into it is really and truly what 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.

STATISTICS SAY THAT 70% OF JOBS ARE FOUND BY NETWORKING.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN NETWORKING

- 1. Identify what you are looking for** - Would you like to know information about a specific position or maybe you want to know about a particular field of interest. You'll need to be able to tell the person that you are speaking with what you are looking for.
- 2. Who are the people that could help you** – Identify 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. What other activities/sports are you involved in** – Are there people associated with these activities that could be of assistance to you in building your network.
- 4. What are some other ways to build a network** –Ask Career Services 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. Finally** – Don't be afraid to talk to people about your interests, even people you meet for the first time at a social gathering or maybe 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?"

WHAT TYPE OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

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

- What is your educational and professional background?
- 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?
- What related occupations might I investigate?
- Is advanced education beneficial in this field?
- Are there professional publications or organizations that I should be familiar?
- Can you recommend additional people for me to talk to?

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, don't be afraid to **have a conversation with the person**. Tell them about yourself – interests, goals, where you're from, etc. If while asking the person a question, they mention something of interest to you or say something that you have in common, feel free to comment about it or inquire further. For example, if the person comments that their work varies from one day to the next, 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/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 he/she 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.

- Tell the person who you are and why you are calling
- If someone suggested you contact this person be sure to mention that person's name
- Ask if they 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 o.k. to set up an informational interview for over the phone.
- To ask the person where would be the most convenient place for he/she to meet you and at what time.
- To confirm the date, time and place that you will be meeting before you end the call.
- To Say Thank you and that you are looking forward to meeting with him/her.

In some cases, the person you contact might say they have the 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 an amicable time that the both of you can meet or talk over the phone.

CONTACTING BY SNAIL MAIL OR E-MAIL:

When 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/attach your resume so that the person can learn a little bit more about you. Sending a letter/e-mail also allows the person some time to consider your request. It is usually best to follow the letter with a phone call about a week or two after the letter is written.

When you contact the person, 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 they recognize your name, you can proceed with a discussion as to if it is possible to meet 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 earlier
- 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's okay to stay longer then that is fine. But if not, start to close the conversation by thanking he/she for their time and let he/she know 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 he or she can 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 that he/she spent with you and the information he/she 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 you connected with what he/she was saying.

Communication is the key to successful networking so it is important to report to your contact when you follow his/her advice, 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 a important relationship where one day you may be able 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 other 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: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Contact Information

Date of first contact: _____ Format: (phone call, letter, e-mail)

Notes: _____

Action taken: _____

Next step: _____

HAVE SOME QUESTIONS?

Call Career Services 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.

Sample A – Letter requesting an Informational Interview

800 Lancaster Avenue
Box 300
Villanova, PA 19085

Mr. Larry Mente
NBC/Channel 10
Bala Cynwyd, PA 190

Dear Mr. Mente:

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 about my interests in the field and he mentioned that you would be a good person to talk to in regards to different opportunities in the field as well as what other types of activities I should take advantage of while in college. Because of my interests in the field, I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me for a 30 minute informational interview?

Villanova has provided me with an excellent starting ground by being involved in the production of our television station WXVU. And while this experience has been very beneficial, I am hoping to learn how I can even further 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 in order to talk about your career and the field of broadcasting. 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,

James Walker

Enclosure