

# Effective Networking

What you know and who you know: both will be essential when you're trying to find job/internship opportunities. *Networking* means cultivating relationships that will help you learn about potential career fields; identify opportunities; and provide guidance during the different stages of your career.

## Building Your Network

**Identify existing contacts.** Think of the people you already know: friends, classmates, professors, work supervisors, coworkers, family members. They all have different experiences from which you can learn and gain new ideas.

**Expand your network.** Who do you want to know? In what industries or locations are you most interested? Think strategically about how to meet new people, which can include using the following resources:

- **Your existing contacts.** Ask for introductions to others in field of interest to you, and name-drop when you make the connection.
- **Alma College alumni.** Approaching alumni is a great way to begin – you will have common experiences that make conversation easy and comfortable. As a new grad and even a current student, you can attend alumni events, which you can learn about through the [Alma College Alumni Association Facebook page](#).
- **LinkedIn.com.** One of the best places to develop new connections is through [LinkedIn.com](#), the world's largest professional network. Both emerging and established professionals use LinkedIn to connect with others, both by reaching out to those they already know and requesting introductions to new contacts. Once you have a LinkedIn profile, you can also join the [Alma Connecting Together](#) group to meet alumni who have expressed a specific desire to help each other succeed.

## Using Your Network

So you have a network – what do you do with it? At this stage in your career, you are primarily gathering information and making your own qualifications known. Seek advice from your network about potential career paths that align with your interests and skills. Ask them how to prepare for and succeed in a career you've already identified, and how to find opportunities. At the same time, make a positive impression on your contacts. Eventually, someone may be in a position to pass along an opportunity or speak in your favor to a potential employer!

## Networking Interviews

Email or a message through LinkedIn are often the most comfortable ways to begin a conversation with someone in your network, and you can certainly ask questions this way. But talking over the phone – or better yet, in person – allows you to gain more insight and make a more lasting impression. This can be a casual conversation in some instances; in others, you may want to make it more formal by casting it as an informational interview. When you arrange an information interview, keep the following in mind:

- Clarify the amount of time you will have with your interviewee (20-30 minutes is reasonable) and stick to it.
- Prepare a list of questions ahead of time.
- Business professional dress is almost always the best way to go, but you may opt for business casual.
- Bring a copy of your current resume to leave with your interviewee.
- Arrive on time and greet the interviewee with a firm handshake and a smile.
- Send a handwritten thank-you note within 24 hours.
- Stay in periodic contact. Ask questions, seek advice, and give positive updates on your situation.

## Networking Questions

### Preparing for a Career in this Field

- What activities, classes or other parts of your college experience best prepared you for your career?
- What is the best decision you made as an undergraduate with respect to your professional life?
- What skills and experiences are most impressive in your field?
- How would you recommend I get the best experience?
- How rapidly is your present career field growing?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this career?
- What entry-level positions offer the most opportunity for growth?
- How do people find out about jobs in this field?
- How well-suited is my background for this type of work?
- With the information you have about my education, skills and experience, are there other fields you would suggest I research further?

### Learning About a Particular Company/Organization

- What is the organizational structure of the company?
- Why did you decide to work for this organization? What do you like most and least about it?
- How does your organization distinguish itself from other organizations doing similar work?
- What is the “corporate culture” like?
- What do your hiring managers look for on resumes, in cover letters and at interviews?

### Previous and Present Job Experience

- What has your career path looked like so far?
- How did you choose this career field?
- How did you prepare for this kind of work? What was your major?
- How do you spend your time during a typical work day or week?
- What do you find most rewarding about your work? What is most challenging?
- What is the average length of time employees stay with your organization?
- If you were a college student again with the chance to do it all over, what would you do differently?

### Lifestyle in Specific Careers

- How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
- Must you perform all your job responsibilities in your place of work?
- Are you expected to be accessible via phone or email outside of the normal workday?
- Does your company provide technology for both business and personal use (ex: phone, laptop, tablet, etc.)?

## More Resources from LinkedIn.com

Blog: <http://blog.linkedin.com>

YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LinkedIn>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LinkedIn>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LinkedIn>

Free Webinars: [http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/530](http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/530)

