

# **NETWORKING: WHY, HOW, WHO, and WHEN**

**Professional Development  
Workshop Series**

Career Development  
and Internships Office (CDIO)

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Up to 80% of jobs these days are found through networking. That is a compelling reason to learn to network, and to do it well! Even if you aren't looking for a full time job, networking can help you find new contacts, new volunteer opportunities, part-time work, or even contacts to help a friend or colleague build their network! Tips and How-to information is listed below for you to review and put to good use. Use the space provided to write down additional notes or thoughts you have about networking.

### **WHY you should network:**

1. To practice presenting yourself, your experience, and your goals for interviews
2. To polish your written and verbal communication skills
3. To practice active and careful listening and engage others in conversation
4. To learn how to and practice asking informed questions
5. To be able to comfortably greet new people with poise and self-assurance
6. To learn about industries, career paths, salary ranges, and education needed for specific careers

### **HOW to network:**

1. Email or call the person, using whichever method you believe is most comfortable for the other person, asking if he or she would be willing to connect or meet for a brief networking conversation.
2. Clean up your internet profile, including personal web pages, Flickr, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. If you wouldn't be comfortable explaining it to your grandmother or President Parkyn, take it off the internet if possible. This includes photos.
3. Be able to explain your goals for the conversation, likely either to hear about their career path and experience, their employer, or if they have any suggestions or contacts for you—maybe all three!
4. Do not ask networking contacts for jobs. Ideally, you want to end the conversation and leave a good impression, learning about the person and their role or industry, and with 3-5 of their own contacts to add to your network.
5. When emailing, calling, or approaching a new contact to ask for a networking meeting or appointment, make sure you know what you're asking for (see numbers 3 and 4).
6. Keep meetings brief; you don't want to take up too much of your contact's time. Thirty minutes should be sufficient for the conversation.
7. Follow this or a similar conversation outline:
  - Introduce yourself and thank them for taking the time to talk to you.
  - Ask about their background. (This gives you a chance to tailor and change your presentation if necessary.)
  - At this point, they will likely transition the conversation to you and why you wanted to connect.
  - Give them a brief synopsis of your experience, including your most recent or relevant job or work experience or degree upon graduation.
  - Explain what kind of role you are looking for, or your search parameters, such as location, size of organization by employees or revenue, industry, or mission.
  - Ask if they have any guidance, feedback, or contacts they would suggest you reach out to.

- Be gracious if they fumble, or aren't sure how to help. Not everyone is an expert at networking, so expect some of your attempts to stall because the contact isn't sure how to help!
  - Write down any follow up items, both for you to do and for them to do, so you can follow up if you don't hear from them and so you can follow up with thanks for items that work.
  - Ask if there is anything you can do to help them—you may have contacts that would be useful to them!
  - Thank them, and restate the follow up items you are committing to, which are usually things like sending them your resume, or contacting a connection of theirs.
8. If appropriate, email or contact the person after your meeting to follow up on action items, or to let them know you've connected with their contacts and to offer additional thanks. Remember that if a new connection is helpful, some of your gratitude is owed to the original reference who thought to connect you two!
  9. Proofread all emails before sending. You should check for the correct name, greeting, closure, body details, subject, and time of day. Make sure you are sending nothing but the most positive impression of yourself, especially if you don't know the person and are just beginning the relationship.

### **WHEN to network:**

1. Set up the meeting (for phone or in person) for a time that is convenient for the contact. It is important that it be easy and not stressful for them to connect with you, so that they will be willing and happy to help.
2. If you are networking via an email conversation chain, try not to send emails earlier than 7am or later than 10pm to your contact. You don't want him or her to feel as if they should respond at all hours, or as if you're pressuring them to speed up the process.
3. Do not pester your contacts. Part of the challenge of networking is patience; just because you are networking with 10 people on Monday does not mean you will hear back from them by Tuesday. It may take a full week or even two weeks. Wait until they respond. If you haven't heard from them in a week or the next steps were for them to complete, send a polite and gentle request for the information. That is your only change to follow up, so word it carefully and be polite. After that if you still haven't heard back, the contact likely either doesn't want to help or doesn't have time to help.
4. Do not expect contacts to network while they are out of the office on vacation or work travel. Even if they offer to meet or schedule a call during this time, politely insist that they keep the previous plans and you will be happy to connect with them when they are free. Also don't expect to network over major holidays, such as Christmas or Thanksgiving.

### **WHOM to network with:**

1. Network with everyone you know. I mean that. You can network with your mom, your neighbor's dog walker, your dentist, your third grade music teacher. Some of these people might be more helpful than others, but don't judge a contact's potential by the relationship. In some cases, family or personal friends can be more helpful because the

relationship may be even stronger than a professional one, meaning they really want to help you!

2. Use LinkedIn to network with professional colleagues. Think of LinkedIn as a Facebook for the professional sphere. You should connect with colleagues, people from your internships, your professors, and anyone else you find that you know. You can use LinkedIn to post your resume, ask for recommendations from people you've worked with, join groups, and get introductions to 2nd or 3rd degree contacts. Jobs are even posted on LinkedIn, so look for that too.
3. Use Facebook to let your social network know you're looking. (NOTE: Only do this if you are known as unemployed or are graduating and looking for full time work. Be careful about alerting a current employer that you are searching. Keep this in mind as you post venting status updates as well.) A carefully worded status update can help friends to search with you. (Example: I recently completed my Bachelor's degree in Sociology and am looking to move in to the Social work industry in the greater Chicagoland area. Any suggestions, tips, guidance, or ideas would be greatly appreciated!)
4. Use Google maps "Search Nearby" function to search for organizations of a specific kind near your address. For example, you could type in Hospital or Doctor to find hospitals located across the Chicago area if you're looking for a nursing position. Then look on the individual websites.
5. Don't forget to search professional associations, trade associations, and publications. A lawyer might find a contact at a law publication that can help him.
6. Join the North Park University Alumni Association on Facebook and North Park Alumni and North Park University groups on LinkedIn to gain access to North Park Alumni who might be able to help. Post a similar note to the example in #3 above to alert alumni to your search and interest in networking.
7. Ask your professors (if you've kept in touch after graduating or think they would remember you fondly and be willing to help) for any professional contacts or advice they might have. You can network with them!
8. Ask your internship site supervisor, or any colleagues you worked with whom you think might be willing to help.
9. Ask the North Park Career Development and Internships office if they are aware of any alumni or internship sites with whom we have strong relationships that might be willing to help.
10. Look up your area's Chamber of Commerce. They will likely have a listing of local organizations that can help you find more options.
11. Keep your Personal Marketing Plan or sheet including your goal or objective, industries, size of organizations, geographic region, example titles, skills, and organizations you are interested in handy at all times (see template on pages 6-7). Pull it out at coffee with a friend, chat with a pastor, or a family reunion. All these people can help you—they are networking contacts and they each have networks of their own as well!

## Sample Networking Questions for You to Use

Once you have set up a networking meeting in advance, or find yourself in such an opportunity in the moment, you should be comfortable asking questions to make the most of the opportunity. Below is a list of questions you should think about ahead of time and be prepared to ask your contact. Remember to smile, be friendly, and focus on the conversation!

- How did you get into your field?
- What is your background in?
- Did you always want to work in that job or field?
- What advice would you give to someone looking to break into that field?
- What professional skills or competencies should I focus on developing?
- Why do you like your field or job? Why not?
- What are some traditional career paths to be in that field?
- Will I be limited in my opportunities if I don't have from the traditional background?
- What kind of education is required to be successful in this field?
- Are there additional hobbies or interests that would be beneficial for me to develop?
- What are the current news topics or trends in your field?
- Tell me about the culture of your organization. What do you like or dislike about it?
- If you could change a few things about your organization, what would you change?
- Is there potential for growth in your industry or do the organizational structures tend to be flatter?
- What career advice do you wish you'd known sooner when looking to transition into full time employment?
- Is there anything else you think I should know?
- What professional or trade organizations are relevant to your industry?

Name  
 Address  
 Telephone Number  
 Email  
 LinkedIn Page

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**Positioning Statement:** Brief, few sentences about who you are professionally, your skills, talents, experiences, and passions. Include computer/software/hard skills as a final sentence.

**Skills and Competencies:** List your skills and competencies. Conduct research on internet if unsure of how to list. For example:

Client Skills	Hard Skills	Leadership Skills	Project Management Skills
Deadline Focused Active Listener Empathetic Risk Awareness	Excel Expert HRIS Software Social Media Expert C++ Programming	Customized Coaching Fast Training Motivator Approachable Respected	Time Management Organized Analytical Negotiation Able to Leverage Network

**Types of Positions:** List examples of title and roles you'd be interested in listed in order or priority. For example:

Bank Manager	Research Associate
Lender	Finance Associate
Consultant	Coordinator

**Locations:** Include 2-3 variations of scope or geographic range, or multiple distinct locations by priority. For example:

- Downtown Chicago
- Chicagoland
- Illinois

-or-

- New York, NY
- San Francisco, CA
- Atlanta, GA

**Preferred Industries:** List the 3-5 industries you're most interested in working in by priority. For example:

- Insurance
- Healthcare
- Consulting

- Finance

**Preferred Organization Size:** List your size preferences for employers by priority. For example:

- 1,000-5,000 employees
- 5,000 + employees
- 0-1,000 employees

**Organizations:** List out organizations you're researching and interested in, by priority of industry and organization within industry. For example:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Insurance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. XYZ Insurance</li> <li>2. Insurance Mania</li> <li>3. We Love Insurance</li> <li>4. Insure Yourself</li> <li>5. Etc.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Healthcare</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Doctors Unite</li> <li>2. New Drug Research</li> <li>3. Vision Center</li> <li>4. Health Works</li> <li>5. Etc.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Consulting</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation 123</li> <li>2. Business Efforts</li> <li>3. Move Forward</li> <li>4. James and Associates Consulting</li> <li>5. Etc.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Finance</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bank of Smithville</li> <li>2. Lenders Inc.</li> <li>3. Corporate Finance</li> <li>4. Loan, Bank, and Build</li> <li>5. Etc.</li> </ol>		