

## Networking

Networking is a vital part of a career search and can lead to great opportunities within your desired field.

### WHY NETWORK?

Networking is the process of exchanging information with others to build professional and social contacts. It is the most common way to find a job as you have a network of people helping to connect you with those in your career field of interest. These connections can point you in the right direction, introduce you to a new contact and recommend you. Networking can also help you:

- Connect with like-minded individuals.
- Identify potential job leads.
- Gain industry knowledge.
- Build connections.
- Learn skills needed for next career.
- Increase your visibility.
- Provide future career opportunities.

### WHERE TO START

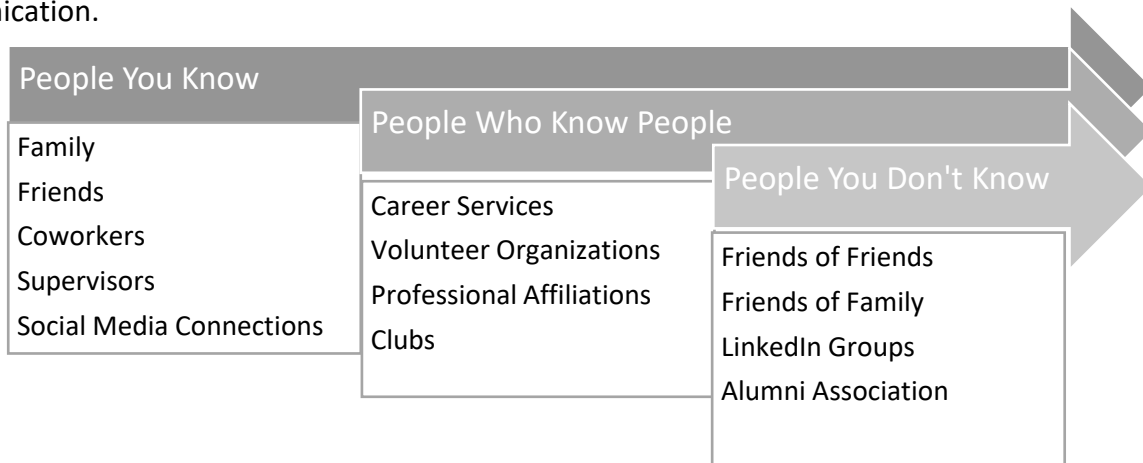
**What** - Establish your goal for networking. Finding liked-minded colleagues in your career field, career advice, finding a mentor, job seeking or relocation. Never ask for a job outright. Remember it needs to be a mutually beneficial relationship.

**How** – Determine how you will communicate your goals with your connections. You can do this with your elevator pitch.

#### Your Elevator Pitch

Your elevator pitch is a brief summary of your accomplishments and goals. This can include your current career field, career interests, and long-term goals. It should be no more than three minutes long.

**Who** - Start with your immediate connections as those relationships are already established and easier for communication.



**Where** - Building connections can happen anywhere. If you start a conversation through email, always try to follow-up with an opportunity to speak via phone, virtually or in-person. This allows for more fluid and open conversations.

### LINKEDIN BASICS

Are you new to LinkedIn? Here are the basics:

**Build Your Profile** – Before you build connections, start with building your profile.

- Profile Photo – Aim for a professional headshot.
- About – This is your professional summary.
- Experience – List your experiences similar to your resume.
- Education – Include your degree/s. High School is optional as it can provide another connection opportunity but date isn't needed.

**Follow** – Begin following groups and companies of career interest. This will help drive your news feed to better populate items of interest.

**Invite Connections** – Start by connecting with people you already know. Once you're ready to connect with those you don't know, include a message so they know why you are reaching out. You can use a shortened version of your elevator pitch or a quick few sentences as to why you want to connect.

**Endorse Connections' Skills** – Because networking is a reciprocal relationship, always offer up endorsements to others. You can do this by viewing their profile and finding their skills' sections. Often, your connection will return the favor.

**Provide Recommendations for Connections** – Similarly, if you know a colleague that is needing recommendations, offer to provide one. Do not provide a recommendation without their permission as this could spark visibility to their profile they may not want.

### OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

You can use additional social media platforms to connect with others, especially if it relates to your career field. Be sure to keep in mind:

- What is the purpose of this platform?
- What does your profile say about you?
- Is it professional?
- Does it cost?
- What are the privacy settings?

### INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational interviewing is a great opportunity to gather information about careers of interest and build your network. While you should avoid asking for a job during the informational interview, you may find your interviewee offering assistance with your resume or connect you with others once they learn more about you. You'll also get great feedback on the pros and cons of the position. Here are some great tips:

- **Identify** - Use your network and LinkedIn to find professionals in the field. For example, if you are interested in non-profit work, find a director who has worked in the field and progressed over several years.
- **Contact** - Make contact through messaging, email or phone.
- **Introduction** - Introduce yourself and provide a brief summary of why you are reaching out. Emphasize you are interested in learning more about them and their career path.
- **Keep it Brief** – Ask for just 15 to 20 minutes of their time, but plan for 30 minutes to an hour if all goes well.
- **Keep the Focus Off You** – Always start by asking about your interviewee. Giving them the opportunity to talk about their experiences helps break the ice and naturally leads into other questions. In turn, you will find they are more willing help you.

### Informational Interview Questions

- What did your career journey look like that landed you here?
- What does your day-to-day look like?
- Why did you decide to work in this industry?
- What's the greatest challenges in your role?
- What keeps you here?
- What type of education or training does your position require?
- What skills are most important in your role?
- What steps would you recommend taking to enter this field?
- Can you recommend any professional associations or journals that would be beneficial for my professional development?
- Could you suggest anyone else I could contact for additional information?

### FOLLOW UP AND MAINTAIN CONTACT

Be sure to maintain contact with your connections and thank those that have helped you in your job search or informational interviewing. Handwritten thank-you notes are acceptable as well as emails if that has been your primary form of communication.