Networking & Self Promotion
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What is networking?
(Networking) is the process of making contacts and exchanging information with other people. It involves building relationships and creating a personal set of contacts that may be able to help you in some way and you may be able to help in some way.

(Networking) is attentively and consciously meeting people, being interested in them, remembering who they are and what they do, and exchanging information with them over time. Organizations themselves engage in networking when they need new employees. As a job seeker, your aim should be to make sure that their networks intersect the network you created.

Many good positions are never posted, because a qualified candidate learned of the position by talking to the right people at the right time, and the position was filled without any formal advertisement. Employers often hire through contacts because they prefer to hire someone they know. If they receive a recommendation of a good candidate, they can feel confident in their new employee while saving time and money as compare to the traditional job posting methods. Hiring through contacts bypasses the need to advertise a position, read countless CV’s, and interview many candidates. With this in mind, you can see how it is beneficial for employers and job candidates to network.

Why to network?
1. The single best source for new positions is “Word-of-mouth”.
2. Gives you an earlier chance at an opportunity, at a time when you can still help shape the job description and influence the level and pay range of the position.
3. Face less competition because no more than of other people will typically be brought in through an organization’s own networking activities.
4. Get you access to people who might not be responsive to direct approach letter, and provides you with the added advantage of a recommendation from someone the hiring manager knows
5. conduct field research, learn about specific field that you are interested in.
6. explore careers, learn about what type of work exist in different fields.
7. obtain information about organizations
8. obtain career advice
9. seek job – search advice
10. create your own job or internship

Who to network with?
No limits for networking, network with every one. That means: relatives, family, friends, colleagues, professors, guest speakers in you class, organizations, doctors, people line in the coffee shop, any one that works in the community, etc........
Network etiquette (How to network)?

- Be well prepared, be able to articulate as much as you know about what you are looking for in your career.
- Always be professional, courteous, and considerate.
- Be interested in the people you meet. Most people enjoy the chance to tell you about their own careers and activities.
- Be a genuine (real). Possess a sincere desire to learn. Be honest in asking for advice. If you are only interested in asking for a job, it will show, no matter how you disguise it.
- Be gracious (polite). Write a thank you letter when people take time to meet with you. Stay in touch.
- Give back. Know enough about the people you meet to keep their needs in mind as you continue to network. You may be able to pass in ideas, articles, and contacts that will interest them.
- Use good judgment about the amount of time you request when you contact people. Do not overstay your welcome and don’t “return to the well” too many times.
- **Shelve your shyness:** you can learn to get over your shyness. Recognize that other people also feels the same way, practice your body language. Find a role model and make something that person does, like a confident handshake, part of your technique.
- **Join groups comfortably:** at any gathering people will be talking in groups, to join a group use your body language, touch someone’s arm gently and firmly to be considered then naturally the circle will be broken for you to enter, keep eye contact with the person you are talking to and smile while you listen. Take a moment to tune into the conversation and participate when you’re ready. Introduce you self when there’s a quiet period in the conversation.
- **Engage your partner:** you can use body language to reward and encourage your partner. Establish eye contact, nod your head for non verbal encouragement, be nice – show your partner you are enjoying the conversation. Smile and use signals. Aim your attention at your partner and ease your attitude.
- **Be seriously curious:** networking is not just about talking, it’s also about listening. Don’t monopolize the conversation; encourage dialogue. Everyone has a story, use interview techniques to avoid did end questions. Ask people where they came from and how they got where they are. Make other people talk.
- **Be careful of turn-offs:** just as easily you can enter a group, you can also have people scrambling to make a run for it. Don’t do monologues or tell the details, they are boring and lose people attention. At the same time don’t interrupt others. Persistence is a good value but know when to stop probing. Be careful of flirting, becoming intoxicated or using offensive language. This type of behavior can make you an unattractive conversation partner at this and future events.

**Establishing a new Contact (asking for informational interview)**

Networking letter is designed to generate informational interview not job interviews. Which allow you to meet individuals who can give you specific information about your intended career. Your purpose in seeking informational interviews may vary, but your reasons for wanting to meet with a contact person must be genuine and sincere. It remains a viable way to conduct job market research, refine career goals, and uncover vacancies information in an industry or a geographical region. Informational interviewing isn’t a magic shortcut to employment; it requires solid preparation, sincerity, and much effort. The networking letter is the first step in the informational interview process. Normally, a resume is not attached to a networking letter, but it may be presented during the interview itself to help the interviewer address your questions. Your aim is to set up an introductory (informational) interview by sending a small number of letters and short CV’s (no more than 10 and not all at the same time) to people that could be interested in your skills and experience. Standard letters is not a good idea. It is important that the recipient feels special,
otherwise they will put your letter in the bin. Use the new technology to deliver your networking letter through emails or telephone calls.

**Informational Interviews**

one of the easiest way to build a professional network is through informational interviews. Informational interviewing offers a resource for finding jobs, which are not publicly advertised. By contacting people already in your chosen specialization, you have access to “inside information” about careers paths, the skills necessary to succeed, and people to contact who may have positions available.

**What’s Informational Interview?**

Informational Interviewing (career conversations) is the process of having conversations with individuals (generally referred to them as career advisors) about their work as a method of career exploration and network building. Informational interviewing is **NOT** job seeking or job interviewing. These career conversations provide an opportunity to:

- Gather career – related information and advice about an organization, job, and related professional concerns that are not available from written sources.
- Create contacts and build relationships with people in your career field. By speaking with professionals in a career, you will be better informed and have the chance to learn the vocabulary of the field – knowledge that will help you to present yourself more effectively in job interviews. (A primary complaint of employment interviews is that job candidates are not well informed about their field of interest)

**Optimal outcomes might include one or more of the following:**

- You learn enough about the field to know that is or is not for you.
- You get new ideas for possible careers and/or jobs in this or related field, or even in different field.
- If you visit your contact’s workplace, you gain a firsthand impression of a specific work environment.
- If you are already decided on a career field, you get practical ideas and insider advice about how to enter that field, i.e., job hunting strategies, way to research job openings, informed guesswork about where the best jobs might be.
- You get the names of other people in your field of interest who can give you more information.
- You develop and maintain friendly relationships with your contacts over time and they may alert you to future job opportunities.

**Who are Career Advisors?**

People agree to be interviewed for a variety of reasons:

- They enjoy getting to know other people who share their interest.
- As a courtesy to a mutual contact or affiliation.
- They enjoy sharing what they find rewarding, satisfying, and frustrating about their work, to pass along more specific information about their profession and employer.

**How do you prepare for a career conversation?**

- Do your research first. Find out as much as possible about the individuals you plan to contact and their organizations and career fields. Read career literature, trade publications, and company information, and conduct research using the internet. See the career field section for specific resources.
- Think carefully about what you hope to learn and the kinds of questions that will elicit that information. Most people prefer to answer questions that require them to reflect on their work. Open ended, evaluative questions are often an effective way to start the conversation. The order and phrasing of your questions will depend on your own style and the flow of the conversation.
- Write down a list of possible questions or topics before you begin to conduct advisor.
- Start with your least intimidating contacts first.

**Some questions to ask in an informational interview include:**

- How do most people get into this field?
- What skills / personal qualities, training, experience, education do you think are necessary to be successful in your field?
- What the job is like? The challenges, rewards, encounters, decisions, frustrations, problems, time consumed.
- What are the lifestyle implications of the work? Salary, benefits, family, policy, travel, pressure, flexibility, security.
- What is the normal work environment? Physical setting, people, organizational structure, culture.
- What are the current issues of the industry?
- What is a typical day like?
- What would you do differently in your career path to get to where you are?
- Could you please look at my CV and give me feedback about what I can do to make myself a better candidate upon graduate?
- Are there other related fields that I should be considering given my interests?
- Is there someone else that I should contact for advice? May I use your name?

The last question may be the most important. For every informational interview you should walk away with at least one more person to contact. In this way, you continue to expand your professional network.

**Few interview guidelines:**

**Do...**

- When requesting the interview, be clear and direct about the goal of your interview (informational not job) and the time commitment (30-40 minutes). Cite your referrals and sources and be prepared for phone interview.
- Act professionally as you would for any interview, dress properly, confirm before one day, arrive little early...
- Listen attentively and ask your questions with the flow of the conversation without losing the track of the time.
- Clarify any special point you missed or didn’t understand, write any referrals or suggestions and then put your comments of what you learned after the interview immediately.
- Stay with your time limit and be sensitive to any clue from the advisor that the time limit is over.
- Write a thank you letter for the time the advisor consumed in interviewing you.

**Don’t...**

- Ask them for a job even indirectly.
- Forget to send a thank you note even for a phone appointment.
- Speak with only one or two people and assume their view is a field representative.

**Matters of judgment**

- **Whether to write or call first.**
  1. Call first: if they have indicated that they would like to be contacted by phone or to confirm information you need to write to them (such as address, title, correct spelling of name)
  2. Write first: if you think that the contact would appreciate having a brief introduction by mail and sense of what you are exploring or if you are not confident introducing yourself on the phone.
Remember even when writing follow up with a call. Experiment to see what works best for you.

- **How and when to present a resume.**
  You should always bring copies of your resume to an appointment with an advisor. Make sure that it is an efficient way to give your contact a sense of your background or as something that you seek advice on, rather than as a ploy to get a job. It is best to present your resume near the end of the meeting.

- **To pay or not to pay**
  For the lunch, drink, etc.. a good rule of thumb is “he who invites, offer to pay” so be prepared to offer a pay, or – as more likely - to pay for your own meal or to graciously accept their offer to pay.

- **Self presentation and your expectations**
  Be your self but also be sensitive to the impression you make. Make sure that your expectations are realistic; know what you hope to learn about their career fields, and don’t expect them to offer you a job or to provide you with general career counseling.

- **Going back to ask for job hunting help.**
  It is reasonable to re-contact the person when you have narrowed your focus and begun a job search. Write or call the advisor and remind her or him of your previous contact, explain your current situation and goals. Ask if he or she would mind passing along your resume or letting you know of job leads.

  Treat an informational interview as a professional meeting. Be prepared with questions, dress professionally, and arrive on time. Ask for a business card. It is important to get names, spellings and titles correct. Any informational interview could lead to a job, so always be prepared. It requires time, energy, a positive and appreciative attitude. The investment repays itself many times over by generating invaluable information, skills, and contacts in a process you can use throughout your life. In the future be willing to be advisor for others who maybe conducting informational interviews.

**Organize your contacts into an easily updatable system**

e.g. computer database, notebook, personal organizer, index cards, etc. you might find it useful to include the following information:

- Name
- Job / Role
- Work details – company, address, phone, mobile, fax, email, website
- Notes on the company – recent and future jobs, press coverage, etc
- How / when you met
- Mutual friends / acquaintances
- Ideas and possible kinds of co-operation.

**Be proactive in developing and maintaining contacts**

- Gather potentially useful business cards/numbers from courses, conferences, meetings, etc.
- Join a professional group representing your area of interest.
- If you attend a course, ask fellow participants and tutors about their work and contacts.
- Think about your social contacts – they may have friends or colleagues in the industry.

The idea is to build up a network of contacts that you can call on for help, advice, or jobs. You have to know why you are networking, so work out who and what you need to know. Networking is a two-way street, so be prepared to share ideas and information. Make an effort to go to meetings and events where you think the people you need to know might be. You might not see an immediate benefit, but over time you’ll
increase your knowledge of your own profession and make useful contacts. Don’t underestimate the value of casual conversations. And remember to follow up and keep in touch.

Self promotion

Networking is a critical component to any successful job search. By now you know that you’ve got to get out and meet new people to find the best leads. But there’s something else that goes hand in hand with networking: Self – promotion is a crucial element to your success in finding a job, moving up to a better one and negotiating a raise.

Beat the fear of self promotion

Many negative connotations typically come to mind when thinking about self promotion. All of which unfortunately keep most people from feeling comfortable and confident when talking about themselves. You know all of the immature favorites: conceited, show-off, braggart, arrogant, egotistical. Nobody wants to fall victim to such name-calling.

Yet, if you are not comfortable claiming your achievements and promoting yourself, it will be difficult if not impossible to get a head in your career. That’s right, you’ve got to toot your own horn! And toot it proudly.

How to overcome self promotion difficulties?

We often talk about our responsibilities rather that our achievements. We’ll rehash our previous job description instead of boasting about our accomplishments. We do this in our resumes, cover letters, conversations and interviews, which often hold us back from getting the job, raise or promotion we deserve. Ask for advice and practice turning every responsibility into an accomplishment. Make a point of going through your resume to make sure every sentence and every bullet reflects an accomplishment that can be quantified or qualified. This is not always possible, but in most cases you’ll find statements that can be tweaked for a powerful improvement.

Throughout your career, maintain a file or a notebook to track all of your achievements – big and small. Whether it is a “job well done” email from a colleague, a thank you note from a client or any other type of praise. At any given time you should be able to identify three to five of your biggest and proudest professional accomplishments.

Knowing what your achievements are will enable you to seize opportunities to set yourself apart from the competition. Remember that job searching is all about sales: the product you are selling is you! If you’re unable to convey the “product” benefit, it’s more challenging to convince a potential buyer to go for it! Once you know what you’re selling and why it is such a special product, when you’re networking and interviewing situations you’ll want to be able to smartly and succinctly convey your greatest strength. Many otherwise smart people blow great opportunities because they are unprepared when meeting someone new. One way to never be caught off guard is to always practice it, the more confident you’ll feel about delivering.

Be specific (focused)

Beyond that, when promoting your self to new contacts and asking them for help in your job search, you’ll want to be as specific as possible with your request. For example; when a manager gets calls or emails from people seeking very generic help, it’s too time consuming for him to respond. The person who says: “I have a wide variety of interests and I’m open to anything” is forcing the manager to think too much for her, which means he is not likely to respond.

On the other hand, the same manager much more likely to respond to the person who says: “I’m looking to get into pharmaceutical sales” or the applicants who write: “I want a job in corporate public relations” in those cases he is apt to offer suggested contacts and resources because they are making it easy for him to offer a few minutes of advice.

It’s completely acceptable - in fact in some cases encouraged - to have more than one pitch if you are exploring careers in different fields. You can position and pitch yourself as an expert in three different fields, as long as you’re able to describe your strengths, success and passion about each of these areas. You
don’t have to categorize yourself to one thing, but it’s essential to make sure you are targeting each of these efforts.

One of the biggest complaints recruiters have about job seekers is a lack of focus. This is especially true in an economic climate that has seen longer periods of unemployment that any of us would want. As the bill piles up and the frustration grows, jobseekers find themselves more desperate. That leads to the “I’ll take anything – just give me a job” approach, which is a huge turn off to potential employers.

**Be positive and proactive**
When there are many highly qualified candidates vying for the same position, it often comes down to the attitude. The candidate which the best outlook, the most positive personality and the more passion for the position usually gets the job. Your self-promotion should never include any negatives. Keep all professional conversations positive and proactive. Leave the baggage behind.

**Be proud**
The last and perhaps the most important issue to realize is that you’ve earned the right to celebrate your accomplishments. Many times when something great happens to us we can’t believe it and we wind up questioning ourselves as to whether or not we deserve it. This is specially true for men and women. We worry that someone will wonder “who does s/he think s/he is?” Fortunately the most successful person have gotten over that fear. They’re not afraid to tell everyone who’ll listen how great they are, and frankly we should applaud them. If you don’t toot your horn nobody else will do it for you – except you mother, but she can’t call every employer on your behalf. Be proud – very proud- of yourself and your accomplishments. You have earned it.

**Other forms of personal marketing**

- **Advertising**: in the trade press / trade journals – not usually very productive for individuals.
- **Direct mail shots**: again may not be productive for individuals.
- **Printed brochures**: expensive, and can be less effective that letters.
- **Show reels**: keep them short (3 minutes)
- **Headed paper, cards, compliment slips, invoices**: essential to convey a professional image. Make them stand out and think about color and design.
- **Self presentation**: people make swift judgment at meetings. Remember to dress appropriately to show that you take it seriously.
- **Occasion cards**: very useful for keeping in touch.
- **Personal website**
Dear Mr. A.Aziz

Dr. Nasser Fahad, professor of Computer Science in University of Bahrain, suggested that I contact you. He thought that, as an alumna, you would be an excellent position to assist me with a career decision.

As a computer science student, I am exploring which career environment to pursue. IT companies, banks, and Programming consultants all sound interesting to me at this point, but I want to go into Careers Day interviews with a clear sense of direction. I would like to get your advice on the long term career implications of each path.

I shall call you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely

Hana Hassan

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