Networking

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Experience it.

Decide it.

USC CAREER CENTER

Approximately 80% of job vacancies are never advertised…

Start networking today!

What is Networking?

The General Definition: The process of interacting with individuals who have interests similar to yours, who are willing to share information about those common interests, or provide the names of others with similar interests.

The Career Related Definition: The process of interacting with individuals who either have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you, who are willing to share information about their position or organization, or provide the names of others who have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you. One of the most popular and structured ways this interaction can take place is through an *information interview*.

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UNIVERSITY OF
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Why Should I Network?

Networking is a good practice for all facets of life. The more people you know, the more resources you have for information or opportunities that might interest you.

- 80% of job vacancies are never advertised. You may only be exposed to 20% of available jobs.

- Most employers would prefer to hire a person referred by a colleague, peer or friend.

- The overall amount of time it takes for you to find a job can be drastically reduced (estimated to be 4-6 months if you network as opposed to 6-9 months using other job search methods).

- The referral process can put you in contact with key people you might otherwise never meet.

- You learn more about your field of interest and various occupations within it, as well as specific organizations, which may help you in choosing a major or career path. (Through the process of elimination you may rule out certain career fields or positions.)

- Doing information interviews early in your career exploration means you will have a collection of resources to call on when you are ready to start your job search!

- Your network can be maintained for years to come and be used repeatedly as you go through job changes later in life.

When should I start?

The earlier you begin, the more resources you will have to call on when you actually need a job. Also, the benefit to starting the process early in your college career is that information interviews can help you in choosing a major or career path.

How can I prepare myself?

Clarify your goals. Write a brief summary of your abilities, interests, and values. Be able to talk intelligently about yourself. Know why you are networking and be prepared to be honest about that with the people with whom you network. Are you just exploring majors and careers, or are you interested in their company specifically for possible future employment? Research the contact's organization as much as you can prior to meeting them.

Career Related Purposes of Networking:

1. To learn more about careers in general.

2. Establish professional relationships that could indirectly result in a job lead.

How Do I Establish My Network?

- Generate a list of companies you are interested in learning more about.
- Generate a list of types of positions you think you would enjoy.
- Brainstorm, Categorize and Prioritize the names of people you think can put you in touch with someone in those

Making the Initial Contact

1. Commit to a schedule (Calling just 2 people a day is over 500 contacts a year).

2. Make the initial contact (use a *well-rehearsed*, but not forced, phone script).
- Properly introduce yourself and mention the name of the person who referred you.
- Explain the reason for your call.
- Do NOT ask for a job—ask for a 20 - 60 minute Information Interview.

3. Send a resume & cover letter confirming the appointment.   Explain in the letter that you have enclosed the resume only so that they might review it and give you suggestions as to your qualifications for the industry.

4. Send a thank you letter following the appointment.

People You Know Well:
Your Parents
Your Friends
Your Friends' Parents
Your Parents' Friends
Classmates (High School and
   College)
Neighbors
Relatives

People related to the industry:
Group and Club Members
Trade Association Members
Professional Organization
   Executives
Speakers of Meetings You've
   Attended
People You've Met at Conferences
Professors
Past Supervisors (Work or
   Internship)
Past Colleagues/Clients/Business
   Partners

People who know people:
Local Chamber of Commerce
Local Bank Managers
Real Estate and Insurance Agents
Politicians
Sales Representatives
Lawyers
Career Counselors
Postal Workers
Local Reporters
Doctors/Dentists
Hair Dressers
Teachers
Alumni
Restaurant Owners
Local Merchants
Travel Agents

The Initial Contact - A Sample Phone Script

"Mr. Johnson. Hi. My name is Michael Smith and I am a student of Dr. Bob Robins. Dr. Robins suggested that I contact you as someone that I could speak with about various career paths in the field of _____. Could I have just 2 minutes of your time?"

"Sure."

"Thanks. I will be graduating from USC in May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering; and at this point, I am trying to gather information about various companies and the types of positions each company has so I can better prepare for my upcoming job search. I can appreciate that you probably keep a busy schedule, but I wondered if you might have between 30 and 45 minutes that I could sit down and talk with you about your experiences in the field."

"I'd be happy to Michael, when did you have in mind?"

"Well, I do have classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, but beyond that I'll be happy to meet with you at your convenience."

"Alright, I can squeeze you in next Tuesday afternoon at 4pm."

"Wonderful, next Tuesday, March 2nd, at 4pm. Where shall I meet you?"

"I'm located in the Highland Towers on Broward Street. The directions are…"

"Okay, I think I can find that. In the meantime, I'd like to send you a copy of my resume so you'll have a chance to look over my background before we meet and perhaps you can give me some feedback on it. What is your email address?"

"Certainly, the email address is…"

"Wonderful. I look forward to meeting with you next Tuesday at 4pm and I'll email that resume to you right away. Thank you for your time, Mr. Johnson. I appreciate it and look forward to your insights."

NOTE:
Caller could also ask for referrals at this time, but may get a better response by asking this at the end of the information interview.

What makes a good call?

- Caller immediately states that he/she is seeking information about various career paths in the contact's field, as opposed to asking for a job.
- Caller, not knowing what he/she might have interrupted, asks if he/she can have 2 minutes of the contact's time.
- Although the caller might actually be well into his/her job search, he/she nevertheless indicates that he/she is simply seeking information about companies to prepare him/her for *later* job searching.
- Caller acknowledges up-front that he/she understands the contact's busy schedule, and is willing to meet at the contact's convenience.
- Caller confirms the time and date of the appointment, and that he/she will send a copy of his/her resume.
- In addition to his/her "thank you", caller appreciates the contact for his time and opinions.

The Information Interview (sample questions)

Company Overview

- What are the functions of your organization/department? What does your organization do?
- What products or services does this organization produce?
- Can you tell me about the background/history of this organization?
- Who are your customers?
- Who are your competitors? Where do you rank among the competition?
- What unique factors would you say set this organization apart from others?
- Do you have any organizational literature that would help me to learn more about this company?
- What values or philosophies does this organization represent?
- How are decisions made in this organization/your department (team effort, empowerment, top-down)?
- What basic assumptions or beliefs would you say are shared and supported by people in this industry or organization?

Position(s) Overview

- What do you do in a typical work day or work week in *your* position?
- What positions do you supervise (if any)?
- What are some of the other types of positions in this industry?
- What type of entry-level positions would exist in this field/organization for someone just graduating from college?
- Do you have a copy of an organizational chart that would show me the progression of jobs from beginning to the top, as well as the reporting and supervision lines?
- Do you have any information on job specifications or job descriptions that I could have?

Occupational/Organizational Interests

- How did you personally become interested in this field?
- What attracted you to this organization/company in particular?

Working Conditions

- What obligations does your work place upon you outside the standard 40 hour work week?
- Are there any travel obligations with your position?
- If there is overtime, is it due more to the nature of this field or the nature of this particular organization?
- How do your work requirements balance with your family/personal commitments?
- Can you leave work at work, or do you take work home with you?
- What is the typical dress code in the industry/at this organization?
- Can you speak about such factors as noise level, privacy, company morale, physical surroundings, and the overall environment?
- What compromises or trade-offs are there in your career field (ethical, financial, etc.)?

Compensation and Advancement Opportunities

- What range of salaries are appropriate for the various positions in your organization? (entry, mid-level, top)
- Do salary ranges vary by employer or region? How does your organization compare to the competition?
- What type of benefits are associated with this organization? (investments, bonuses, tuition reimbursement)
- What is the typical career path of someone in this organization? What is the time-line for this career path?
- What opportunities exist internally for advancement or change of position?

Outlook of the Company/Field

- Have there been any noticeable trends in this industry?
- What is the outlook for this field/organization regarding growth, advancement or upcoming changes in general?
- What is the demand and security level for employees in this field/organization?

Satisfaction Level

- What do you find most rewarding about your work? Least rewarding?
- If you were ever to leave this kind of work, what would the reason be?
- Are your major frustrations internal or external factors?

Job Preparation / Requirements

- What specific skills or aptitudes would someone need to enter this field?
- What personal qualities or attributes (temperament, attitudes, values, beliefs) seem to serve a person well in this type of work?
- What expectations does this organization have of its employees?
- What special training or specific education (degree or coursework) is required? Is a graduate degree required?
- What kind of part-time work experience could help someone to prepare for this field?
- Are any particular licenses or certifications essential in this field?
- My strongest interests involve _____. Would this job allow me to use these skills? How well suited is my background for this kind of work?
- Are there any special problems or concerns that someone considering this kind of work should prepare for?

Related Fields and Job Search Techniques

- What fields (if any) do people seem to "shift from" and do well in your career area?
- What fields (if any) do people leave this industry to pursue?
- What other fields are related to this one?
- How did you get your position in this organization?
- What steps did you take to get from your initial position to where you are now? (Did advancement take place?)
- What do you suggest is the best strategy for obtaining an entry level position in this field?
- How/where are most positions for this organization or this industry advertised?

Advice/Recommendations and Referrals

- How would you advise people entering into this kind of career?
- What should a person look for in an organization such as this as they consider positions?
- Would you mind if I contacted you / met with you again in the future if I need additional advice or information?
- Based on our conversation today, is there anyone else you think would be helpful for me to talk with?
- Would you be willing to let them know I will be in contact with them?
- May I mention your name as the person who referred me?
- Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
- Do you have any suggestions about my interpersonal skills?
- Are there any questions I didn't ask you that you feel I should?