

Making Effective Professional Connections

Networking is, very simply, connecting with people who work in a field of interest to you in order to learn more about the field. It is not about asking for a job, but often leads to the connections that can help you land the job you want. More people find their jobs and internships through these connections than any other method and research shows that nearly 60-80% of jobs are landed this way.

The Basics

- You can network with alumni, parents, friends of parents, parents of your classmates, faculty and staff members, coaches, people you meet on an airplane – virtually anyone.
- Remember that you have something to offer. If you present yourself as prepared, professional, well-spoken, and enthusiastic, contacts will be excited to help you gain more connections in your chosen field of interest.
- You have to carefully manage your contacts – networking is only as good as the time you put into it. Don't forget to follow-up any meeting with a thank you note.

Getting Ready

- Once you have identified fields that you want to learn more about, make a list of anyone you know who might have some knowledge of those fields. Career Services can help you find professionals in almost any field.
- Get organized: Create a notebook or spreadsheet to track your contacts (it grows quickly). Include sections to record the contact's name, title, address, phone, email, dates of contact, type of contact, results of contact, date to follow up, type of follow up (i.e. call, send resume, etc), names of additional contacts given, and a place to make general notes for each contact.
- If the connection is a 2nd level contact in LinkedIn and you don't know them you should go through your 1st level connection for an introduction. If the 2nd level connection is in a LinkedIn group in which you are interested, join that group and you can connect that way.

- Screen your own voicemail message, auto-reply, etc. to be sure all of your messages are professionally appropriate.
- Have a resume ready to go.

Jumping In

- Make the initial call or write the initial letter/email:
 - Introduce yourself, explain why you are contacting them and express interest in setting up a time to meet or talk on the phone to learn more about their job, organization, etc.
- Sample phone/email script:
 - #1 "My name is John Smith and I got your name from my Husson advisor. I am a junior at Husson and have decided to pursue some type of environmental work after graduation. I am familiar with your organization and very interested in the work you do. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to answer a few questions about the industry and your organization."
 - #2 "My name is Mary Jones. John Miller gave me your name and suggested that I contact you regarding my interest in your work. I am a sophomore at Husson majoring in English and am just starting to explore career possibilities. One career that really interests me is Radio Broadcasting. I work as a DJ at the college radio station and spent last summer as an intern with KKJL in Seattle. I am calling to see if it would be possible to meet with you during my upcoming trip to Seattle. I will call you next week to find out if we can arrange a mutually convenient time for an informational conversation."

Relevant Questions for a Meeting

In an informational meeting you can ask questions about the person with whom you are speaking, the organization they work for, or the industry. Bring 4-6 questions as it is up to you to lead this meeting.

Sample questions for the contact

- How did you first get interested in this field?
- What has been your career path?
- Does your work relate to the studies you pursued while in college?
- How did other aspects of your college life prepare you for this field?
- What do you enjoy most and least about your work in this industry and why?
- Describe a typical work day. Are there lifestyle choices that you have made because of the work you do?

Sample questions about the organization

- What is the mission of your organization?
- What skills and experiences are necessary?
- What is a typical career path for employees?
- Does your employer offer training programs?
- What are possibilities for advancement?
- How would you describe the workplace environment?

Sample questions about the career field

- What kind of education is recommended to excel in this field?
- What are typical entry level jobs?
- What is the salary range for these positions?
- Can you recommend professional resources that would be helpful for researching the field and the people who work in it?
- My interests are _____. Where might they fit into this field?

Managing a Productive Meeting

- Dress professionally.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Bring copies of your resume so you can get feedback on how to improve it for that particular

field or so the contact can forward to their connections.

- Show that you have done your research, and be prepared to answer interview questions. An informational conversation has been known to turn into a first round interview.
- Don't ask questions that you could have easily answered with a little research of your own.
- Ask for advice on next steps: "What might I do to learn more? If you were me, what would you do next to pursue a position in this field?"
- Always ask, "Whom else do you recommend I approach for advice about entering this particular field?" Write down those names and be sure to follow up with them to expand your network.

Following Up and Continuing the Loop

- Write a thank you note or email immediately.
- Be sure to follow up on any advice or additional contacts that are offered.
- Stay in touch with periodic updates to contacts and let them know the end result.
- Get connected on LinkedIn with the connections you make. (See Social Media Tip Sheet).

Contact Career Services

James Westhoff, Director
203 Peabody | 207.992.4909 |
westhoffj@husson.edu
www.husson.edu/careerservices

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Check out this Youtube video on the power of networking to find opportunities.