

# NETWORKING: How to get your Foot in the Door

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## REALITY CHECK

Be realistic about how long your job search will take. Students who have been actively involved in the process while still in school (e.g., completed internships and followed the advice in this booklet) can often get hired in the field of their choice before or soon after graduation.

On the other hand, if you wait until you graduate, it can take six months or more.

# Typical NETWORKING TIMELINE/CHECKLIST

<b>SENIOR YEAR</b>	
<b>Fall Semester</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look at where you live (or will live) and consider the distance you're willing to commute. Make a list of several potential employers within your commuting range.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a chart or spreadsheet showing each employer and the job areas you are focusing on. These are your winter contact targets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you have an updated résumé (if you need help, make an appointment with a Career Development staff member), and make sure that you know how to write:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover letters</li> <li>• Thank you emails/letters and notes</li> <li>• Follow-up emails/letters</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>December</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin completing your chart (page 7) with the names of people you know.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Even if your initial list contains people who are not working in your areas of interest, plan to contact them. They will lead you to the people you are hoping to meet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you don't already know how to interview, make an appointment with a Career Development staff member.</li> </ul>
<b>January</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Call people from your initial list, and explain to them what you are doing (see example, page 8), and begin to build your list of contacts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When you meet with these contacts, ask them for names and phone numbers of others in the field. Say that you plan to have a conversation similar to the one you're having with them. If you have been pleasant and engaging, they'll probably help you meet more people.</li> </ul>
<b>February</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continue pursuing professionals in order to expand your network.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you can't reach someone through your network, call the organization, ask for the name of the person in the career field you're pursuing and call him/her directly. Ask for a 20-minute informational meeting. If you feel uncomfortable "cold calling," send a networking email first.</li> </ul>
<b>March</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Achieve your goal of meeting all the key people you need to know.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In addition to initiating these relationships, make sure that you maintain them with follow-up letters (see examples starting on page 15).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look in trade publications and job websites for positions that might have slipped through your network. Positions that you haven't thought of might emerge.</li> </ul>
<b>April, etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep your network of relationships alive through follow-up emails, notes, calls, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When you hear of a position, send a cover letter with your résumé. Mention the name of your professional contact, if appropriate.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be sure that you are ready for interviews.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When you accept a position, send a final "thank you" telling your contacts about your new job.</li> </ul>

## WHY ARE SO FEW JOBS ADVERTISED?



**Only 20% of available jobs are advertised on job websites or in career development, professional journals or other publications.**

This means that you can locate *some* jobs using traditional tools. Although these represent fewer jobs, don't give up on job listings; they are part of a complete job search.

**80% of all jobs are NOT advertised ANYWHERE.**

This means in addition to looking at job listings on web sites like Handshake and other sources, you will probably need to find other creative ways of looking for a job. The most effective way is to **build relationships through networking**.

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It's easier to understand why so many of the available jobs are not advertised when you see the situation from the employer's point of view, so consider this example:

*Imagine yourself as a supervisor. Seven employees work with you in your department. One of these employees, Katelyn, comes up to you today, and tells you she has accepted a position with another organization. She'll be leaving in two weeks.*

Okay, now what do you do? You need to replace Katelyn soon. First, you'll probably try to think of qualified people you know *personally* who could do her job, and you'll possibly call professional colleagues who might know someone. Second, you'll ask your other six employees whether *they* know someone who is qualified for the job. Third, you will post the position internally, probably on your company website. Finally, if no candidates are found through any of these means, you will advertise the position externally.

**The first three strategies in the example point to sources for networking that YOU can use:**

- Supervisors who hire employees in your career field
- Current employees in a career area you're interested in
- Anyone who works for an organization that hires people in your field

Employers use networking for two main reasons: (1) it doesn't cost any money, (2) by relying on people they trust (themselves, their employees, and other professional contacts), they have a much better chance of quickly finding qualified people. In addition, by considering smaller numbers of potential employees, they save staff time that would be devoted to screening, interviewing, and processing candidates.

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**Guess what this means for you?** Your chances of finding a job are often related to the *number* of people (and the *kinds* of people) whom you can contact and inform of your job search and your qualifications. Your success is also related to your persistence in maintaining your relationships with these people.

This is called **NETWORKING**.

# NETWORKING SKILLS 101

You already know lots of people, but you don't need to use networking to talk with *them*, of course. "NETWORKING" refers to relationships you develop when your friends, neighbors, professors, etc. introduce you to *other* people who provide you with career information and advice. These people can also keep you up-to-date on available and upcoming jobs that may not be publicly listed.

*But networking is NOT asking everyone for a job!*

Networking also refers to the **relationships** that you **develop** with these professional contacts through conversations that focus on gathering and sharing information (and these conversations are called informational interviews). And this does result in learning about job openings!

## WHO SHOULD YOU TRY TO MEET?

Your primary goal in networking is to meet people who are employed in the types of jobs that you want, and to ask them for career information and advice. These are the people who know the most about job openings for you.



Some "experts" suggest that you try to meet with people *who have the power to hire you*. The rationale is that you can convince the decision-maker to offer you a position. This is usually difficult, unless you know enough about a specific organization to genuinely understand what will save them money and increase productivity (and then convince them that you can make it happen). It's better to talk with people who are currently *in the type of position that you are seeking*. These people typically have more time to talk with you, have more accurate information about their field, and know of more "potential" openings than their supervisors. Remember that employees don't usually tell their supervisor that they're looking for a job, but they tell their co-workers. So that's who you need to contact!

Sometimes, students who have little experience in the work world are apprehensive about talking on the phone with someone in a professional position. The beauty of networking is that you aren't "cold calling." You are usually calling someone whom you know, or someone who has been recommended to you. As long as you are pleasant and you don't ask for a job, people are receptive to talking with you.

## FOCUS ON INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Networking produces long-term results. Usually you won't quickly get a job interview (or a rejection!) because in networking you don't ask people for a job; you ask about the career field that you plan to enter. This leads to information about potential and actual job openings because you stay in touch, and they remember you when they learn about an opening, even if it's several weeks after you first met.

Although you are **looking** for a job, you aren't **asking** for a job. You're asking for *information* and *advice*.

## A NOTE ABOUT LINKEDIN

If you know someone well, ask them to join your professional network on LinkedIn, and personalize your message to them. If you don't know the person well, see if someone will introduce you through LinkedIn.

# How to NETWORK

## The Basic Formula

- CHOOSE your geographic area and career field(s)
- START with an initial list of people you know
- DEVELOP a list of contacts
- CALL contacts to arrange informational interviews
- CONDUCT informational interviews
- FOLLOW UP with “thank you” and “relationship” emails
- LEARN about job openings from your contacts

- CHOOSE your geographic area and career field

It’s easier to focus your search when you establish some limits.

**Geographically**, you might consider your maximum commute, and then draw a circle on a map showing your working radius from home.



**Career Fields** should be related to your area of study and/or your experience. Begin narrowing your career goals and clearly define your functional areas of interest. Find common elements in these areas. This will make it easier to briefly convey your interests and skills. Don’t say that you are “willing/able to do anything”; that sounds like you really have no specific interests or skills.

- **START with an initial list of people you know**

Get in touch with individuals with whom you have already developed relationships. You probably have a lot of professional relationships and don't even realize it. For example, consider internship supervisors, field placement supervisors, previous job supervisors, faculty in your major, family friends and others in the groups listed below. Write some of the names in this table. You'll refer back to these names in the next few pages.

<i><b>Faculty and supervisors</b></i>	
<i><b>Personal and family friends</b></i>	
<i><b>Organization and group members</b></i>	
<i><b>People who live in your chosen geographic area</b></i>	

## • DEVELOP a list of contacts

The people you listed on the last page can help you identify and meet with contacts who are working in the field you want to enter.

### **If the people on your initial list ARE in your field:**

First, send an email to your field placement supervisor, your internship supervisor, and other contacts. Keep them informed of your academic progress and your plans so that when you call them to schedule an informational interview it will feel more natural to both of you.



### **If the people on your initial list are NOT in your field:**

It's okay; many of the people on your initial list will not be directly related to your career field. However, many of these people will lead you to the other people who *are* in your field. Here is a simplified sample telephone introduction to illustrate how you might approach a personal contact who works outside of your field:

"Hi, Helen! This is Doug Wallboard, Ilene and Bob's son.

"Helen, you know that I'll graduate from Capital University in May, and I've decided to explore the field of biology in Columbus' health care industry. I need to find out more about the field, relevant organizations, and the Columbus area before I leap into the job search.

"I need to meet with people in the field to ask them a few questions; get some information and advice. Do you know anyone in Columbus who [works at a hospital or other health care facility...works in biology...knows a lot of people]? Would you feel comfortable with my telling them that you referred me? I plan to ask if I can schedule a time to talk with them for about 20 minutes."

Helen (and other contacts) will give Doug names and phone numbers of related professionals. Then Doug will move on to calling them to schedule informational interviews.

**Who should be part of my Network?**

- Classmates
- Alumni, recent grads
- Family and other relatives
- Classmates' family and friends
- Professors, especially your advisor
- Administrators
- Athletic coaches
- Guest speakers in classes
- Current and former employers
- Members of organizations
- Friends
- Neighbors



## • CALL contacts to arrange informational interviews

You can call your former field placement supervisor or internship supervisor directly. They're working in your field and they'll help to connect you with other people. You already know them (and you should have kept in touch with them), and you can easily schedule some time to ask for information and advice. But not all of your connections will be so direct.

Also, remember that calling is usually more effective than email, LinkedIn, or texting!

### **Some of the people on your initial list will connect you with professionals who work NEAR those in your field:**

Sometimes those on your initial list will be links to people who are still not in your career field, but may work for the kind of organization that hires people in your field. As an example, suppose Helen gave Doug the name of a friend, Ivy Hectare, who works at OSU Hospitals in the Training and Development area:



"Hi, my name is Doug Wallboard. A friend of mine, Helen Barnwood, suggested that I call you. Do you have a couple of minutes now, or would it be better for me to call back some other time?" (Assuming that this is a good time to talk, Doug would proceed...) "I'm currently a student at Capital University, and I'm interested in getting some information and advice about using my biology degree in a health care setting. Could you help me by giving me the name and phone number of someone who works as a research assistant or someone who works in another medical testing area?"

"Sure, I can think of two people who work here, Janet Styles and Stan Retrograde. I'm sure they'd be happy to talk with you. I'll get their phone numbers for you."



*Doug will then call these directly-related professional contacts and ask them for an informational interview (see example on next page)*

### **ISOLATION IS YOUR ENEMY**

You must get out and meet people. Calling from home to make initial contacts is great; take it to the next step and arrange to talk to people in person! This is where you truly develop power and influence in your job search.

It is also a good idea to network with other job hunters. A friend and fellow job searcher might hear of a great job that is perfect for you!

## **How to request an INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:**

### **Be considerate of their time, and mention your connection to them**

"Hello, Ms. Styles. My name is Doug Wallboard. Ivy Hectare suggested that I call you. Do you have a couple of minutes right now, or is there a better time for me to call?"

### **Explain your background**

"I'm currently a biology student at Capital University. I'll graduate in May, and I am exploring related careers in the Central Ohio area."

### **Ask to meet with them**

"I'm interested in using my biology background in a health care setting. Could I meet with you some time during the next week or two for about twenty minutes? I'd like to ask for some information and advice, and I'm hoping that you can help me gain insights into the profession."

*Sometimes people will want to talk over the phone, but often they will invite you to their workplace. When possible, choose to meet at their workplace because you'll learn more and make a stronger connection with them.*

## **You can also try Email**

Email often feels "safer" than calling. It *can* be a good first step. Your email should include:

- A subject line that includes the name of the person who referred you.
- A brief introduction about yourself and a reference to the person who referred you to them.
- A brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person's field or organization.
- Why you would like to talk with them. Be straightforward; tell him/her you are asking for information and advice and would like to set up a time to speak with them.
- Your phone number.

Remember to proofread all your correspondence!

# • CONDUCT informational interviews

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW



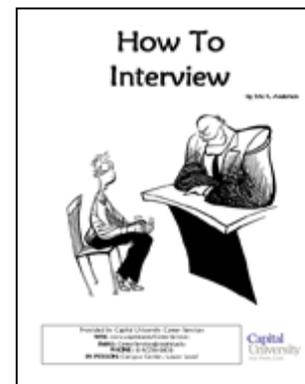
### Do some research

For an informational interview to be truly effective, you can't just "wing it."

Thorough research is an absolute necessity when you go on a regular job interview. For an informational interview, you don't have to do quite as much, but some degree of research will greatly enhance the quality of informational interviews. If you are informed about the organization and the field, you'll be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions, you'll respond more thoughtfully to information and any questions the professional contact might ask you, and you won't ask questions that could easily have been answered by doing your homework.

Resources include:

- Organization website
- Annual reports
- Capital's library reference material (ask a reference librarian)



### *Dress appropriately*

To make a good impression and be remembered by the employer, dress professionally. You can dress as you would for a regular job interview. Another guideline is to dress as the person you are interviewing would dress on an important workday.

### Bring your résumé

Bring a copy of your résumé along with you but **DO NOT** provide it unless requested. Keep your résumé in your portfolio with your notepad and the list of questions you are going to ask.

## MENTAL HEALTH

It's easy for your mental health to suffer if you're not reaching your goals...so change your goals. Instead of the long-term goal of finding a job, focus on shorter-term goals.

For example, you might try to call ten people each day, and schedule five informational interviews per week. You'll feel better about your job search as you accomplish these manageable goals.

## AT THE INTERVIEW

### Ask questions

As you introduce yourself, thank your professional contact for his or her willingness to meet with you. Re-emphasize that you are looking forward to learning and gathering information about his or her career field.

- Clearly explain your background and what you are trying to achieve.
- Be direct and concise with your questions.
- Be enthusiastic and show interest; maintain good eye contact and posture.
- Be considerate of your contact's time. If you asked for 20 minutes, stick to it.

Pay attention to what is said, and ask a follow-up question if something isn't clear. Keep the conversation friendly, brief, and focused on the professional contact's job and career field.

The next page lists some typical informational interview questions. Modify them so they sound like something you would say, and come up with your own questions, too! **Remember that you won't have time to ask all of these questions**, so target those you feel will be most useful.

### Ask, "who else should I talk with?"

This is the key to networking. At the end of your conversation, summarize what you have learned from them, and the direction that you are heading with your career. Then explain that you are trying to meet people in related positions from a variety of organizations. Ask for their help. Say something like, "Can you suggest other people that I can talk to in order to learn more about this (or a related) profession? May I let them know that you provided their name to me?"

You can help them think of other professionals! Let them know that you are especially interested in three or four specific parts of the job or the career field that they shared with you, and then ask them to consider who comes to mind as good "next step" connections, since they now know those three or four things about your interests. Let them know that you would like to have a *similar conversation* (that is, asking for information and advice) with those people.

**Ask about people they know at their organization.** If you're talking with a tax manager, ask if she can refer you to one of their staff accountants, since that's really the position level that you're seeking.

**Ask about people in their field at other organizations.** If you're talking with a staff accountant at a small firm, tell him that you would like to have a similar conversation with an accountant at a large firm, and ask if he would feel comfortable providing a name and contact information to you. Be specific if you have a list of organizations that you would like to pursue.

### Take notes

In addition to names and phone numbers of additional contacts, write down the career and organization information that you're learning in the interview.

### Never ask for a job

Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not hit them up for a job. If they ask you "are you looking for a job right now?" you can say that your goal is certainly to get a job, and that the purpose of THIS meeting is to gain information and advice.



## **SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

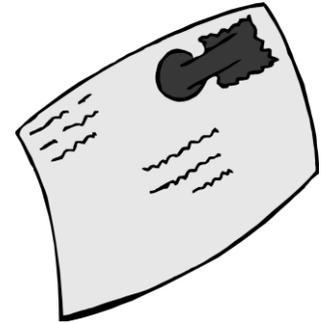
1. How did you get into your career field? Is that typical?
2. How does your organization differ from others in the area? How is it similar to others in the area?
3. Can you describe a typical week in your office? A typical day?
4. What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
5. Why did this type of work interest you originally, and why does it still interest you?
6. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
7. What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
8. What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
9. What are some of the positive and negative aspects of this field?
10. What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
11. How would you describe your work with other departments in your organization?
12. How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
13. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
14. What is the job market like in this area?
15. How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
16. What is the best way to enter this occupation?
17. What other jobs require a similar background?
18. Are there related fields or organizations that I should explore?
19. What are the educational requirements for this job? What other types of credentials or licenses are required? Are specific majors required?
20. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?

- **FOLLOW UP with a thank-you email/letter and relationship emails**

**Always send a thank-you email, note card, or letter**

Be sure to send a thank you email, card, or letter within one day of the interview. This communication is an effective way to leave a good impression with your new contacts. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for their time. Be sure to include your address and phone number.

(See examples on the next two pages)



**Maintain your network**

You have spent 20-30 minutes with this person, asking questions, getting advice and sharing a little about yourself, and you have asked for names of additional contacts. Now you need to work to ensure that this person remembers you when they hear of a job opening! Most people will feel good about your staying in contact with them. You do not have to call or write every week (besides, that would be annoying). Just keep your professional contact posted on your progress. Use the sample relationship emails starting on page 17.

- **LEARN about job openings from your contacts**

After you complete these steps, you will start to learn about job opportunities. When you apply for these jobs, mention your professional contact in your cover letter (if you contact person is connected to the recruiter or the organization); it will increase your chances of being noticed.

When you accept an offer, send a final thank-you to ALL your contacts (see example on page 19).

**IT'S NOT WHO YOU KNOW...  
IT'S WHO KNOWS YOU**

Make sure that the people who know about job openings know YOU! Remember the importance of relationship letters and other personal contact. Your name should be the first one in their mind when they hear about a position opening.

# THANK YOU EMAIL

(sent immediately after an informational interview)

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank the professional contact for the time spent talking with you, helping you to understand the field, sharing insights, whatever. Mention the date of your meeting in your statement.

Mention something significant that you learned or discussed in your meeting (which you wrote down immediately after the interview). Be specific. If possible, tell the professional contact the course of action you will take in the near future. This will make a good lead-in to your first follow-up email.

Again, but in a different way, say that you appreciate the help. Indicate that you will keep in touch.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

# MAILED THANK YOU LETTER

(use this format if you are printing and mailing the thank-you)

Your Address  
City, State Zip  
Date  
Phone number  
Email address

Name of Professional Contact  
Title  
Department  
Organization  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank the professional contact for the time spent talking with you, helping you to understand the field, sharing insights, whatever. Mention the date of your meeting in your statement.

Mention something significant that you learned or discussed in your meeting (which you wrote down immediately after the interview). Be specific. If possible, tell the professional contact the course of action you will take in the near future. This will make a good lead-in to your first follow-up email.

Again, but in a different way, say that you appreciate the help. Indicate that you will keep in touch.

Sincerely,

(your signed name)

[Your typed name]

# INITIAL RELATIONSHIP EMAIL

(sent three weeks or less after the thank you)

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate that you are bringing your professional contact up to date on your activity and progress. In order to assist with memory, mention a significant interaction between the two of you, or something you learned in your meeting (but not the same thing you wrote in the thank you letter).

Write about what you have accomplished since you last spoke (you should follow up on the course of action you mentioned in your thank you letter). Show the tangible contribution that your professional contact has made to your progress and success. If you have made progress in a number of areas, write two paragraphs.

Thank them again for the help and advice. Add an upbeat final sentence that serves to continue the relationship (e.g., You've been a great help to me!). Include your phone number in the contact information below.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

## ONGOING RELATIONSHIP EMAIL

(similar letter sent every three weeks after *initial* relationship email)

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Indicate that you are bringing your professional contact up to date on your activity and progress over the last three or four weeks.

Write about what you have accomplished since you last wrote. Did you make appointments with the people who have been recommended to you? Have you already seen them? What did you learn? To whom did *they* refer you? (This cycle continues in subsequent emails.)

Make a statement about what you plan to do next. Show that you have a plan, that you are organized, and that you are actively pursuing your objective.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

## **FINAL RELATIONSHIP EMAIL**

(sent to *all* professional contacts after accepting a position)

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Let each professional contact know that you have accepted a position. Share the specifics: title, organization, starting date.

Explain how this person's help was instrumental in your obtaining this position. Mention professional contacts, information, insights...any aspect of your interaction which was a benefit to your job search.

Express your most sincere appreciation for all that has been done for you, and mention keeping in touch with them in the future.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

### **Career Development staff will help you**

Building and developing your network of contacts can seem overwhelming, and at times, frustrating. When you have questions or concerns about any part of this process, let us know. We will help!

Stop by Blackmore Library (second floor) or contact us:

Email: [CareerDevelopment@capital.edu](mailto:CareerDevelopment@capital.edu)

Phone: 614-236-6606