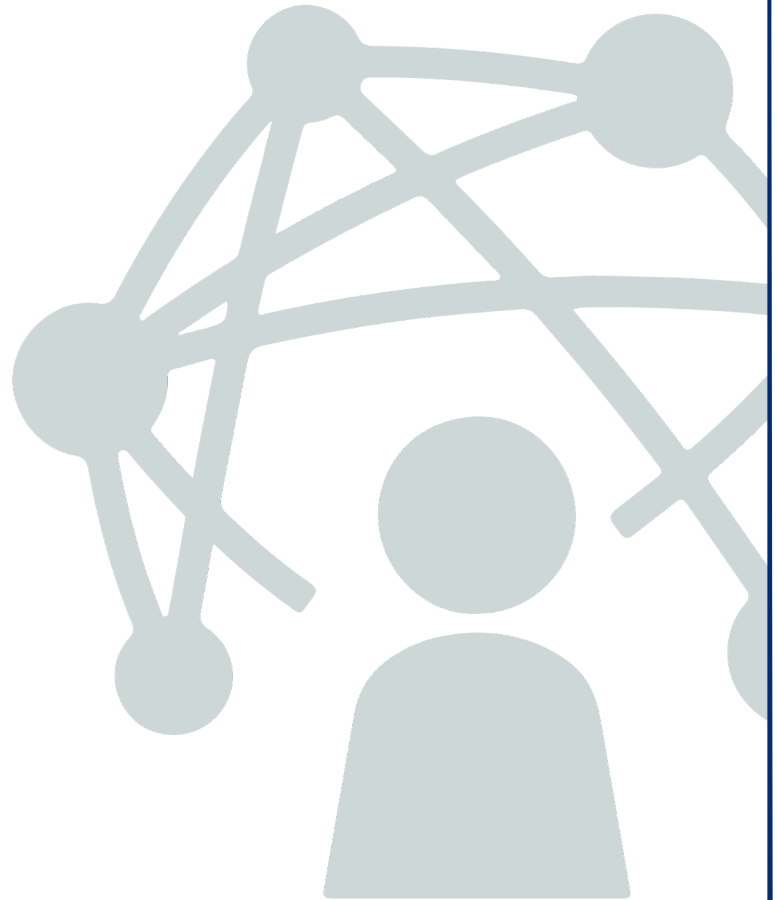


Enhancing Professional and Personal Development

THE ART OF NETWORKING



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CAREER Education. CAREER Experiences. PRE-PROFESSIONAL Advising. ENTREPRENEURSHIP.

Networking Basics

What Networking Really Is

- Networking isn't just for job hunting – it's about building ongoing professional relationships.
- It's the process of connecting with people, sharing information, and opening doors for future opportunities.

Asking for Advice

- Many students feel uncomfortable reaching out, but most professionals like being asked for advice.
- People enjoy sharing their experience and helping students succeed.

Why Networking Matters Long-Term

- Networking takes time, effort, and motivation – it's not a one-time activity.
- It doesn't stop once you get a job – strong relationships help you grow throughout your career.
- Staying active in your network keeps you visible in your field and increases your chances of new opportunities.

Why Networking Is Critical to Professional Success

- Many jobs are already partially or fully filled through connections before they ever appear online.
- Networking helps you avoid large applicant pools – companies often interview fewer candidates who come through referrals.
- It gives you access to people and opportunities you couldn't reach by only cold applying.
- A personal referral from someone the employer trusts can make you stand out – sometimes more than your resume.

How the WCCPE helps!

- Attend WCCPE events and presentations to build skills and meet employers.
- Connect with professionals on LinkedIn – we can help you build a strong profile.
- Meet with a career advisor to identify and grow your existing network.
- Participate in the Shadowing/Mentoring Program to learn directly from professionals in your field of interest.



Who is Already in My Network?

Create Your Contact List

You probably know more people than you think – most people have over 250 potential contacts in their network.

Start by listing people in these categories:

Personal Contacts

- Friends
- Family & relatives
- Neighbors
- Faith community members
- Social clubs, sports teams, or organization members

Community Contacts

- Local business owners
- Doctors, dentists, or service providers
- Chamber of Commerce members
- Lawyers or financial professionals
- Clergy or community leaders

School Contacts

- Professors & teachers
- Classmates
- Alumni
- Advisors & coaches
- Sorority/Fraternity members
- Campus organization leaders

Work & Professional Contacts

- Past supervisors or coworkers
- Internship site supervisors
- Customers or clients you've worked with
- Employers you've met at events
- Industry speakers or mentors
- Recruiters or career fair representatives

Ways to Develop Other Contacts

- Connect with professionals on LinkedIn.com
- Attend professional/trade association meetings
- Volunteer for non-profit organizations
- Visit with members of your social/religious groups
- Strike up a conversation with someone else waiting in line or in an office
- Sign up for a club or class of interest
- Stay in contact with former co-workers
- Become an early-morning regular at a coffee shop or restaurant where professionals gather



Start Networking

- **Be Ready To Share About Yourself:**
 - *You should be able to answer:*
 - Who are you? (Name, school, major, year or graduation date)
 - What experience do you have? (Jobs, internships, campus roles)
 - What are you looking for next?
- **Know Your Goals**
 - What roles or fields interest you?
 - What skills and experiences do you bring?
 - What are your future career interests?

Informational Interviews Matter

Informational interviews are one of the most effective networking tools. They let you learn directly from professionals, get real-world advice, and build relationships — without the pressure of applying for a job. Many opportunities come from these conversations, including referrals, job leads, and mentors who remember you when something opens up.

Informational Interviews (Quick Guide)

Before you reach out

- Research the person, company, or industry
- Know what you want to learn

What to include in your outreach

- Who you are
- Your connection (student, alum, mutual contact, event, etc.)
- Why you're reaching out (to learn more, ask advice — not ask for a job)

Example message:

Hello ____,

My name is ____ and I'm a ____ major at Elmhurst University. I'm exploring careers in ____ and would love to learn more about your experience at ____.

Would you be open to a brief phone call or Zoom meeting in the next week or two?

Thank you for your time!

How to Structure the Conversation

1. Break the ice – Thank them, find common ground.
2. State your purpose – You're seeking advice or insight, not asking for a job.
3. Share your background – Your studies, experience, and interests.
4. Ask questions – About their role, career path, trends in the field, advice.
5. Ask for referrals – "Is there anyone else you recommend I speak with?"
6. Follow up – Send a thank-you email within 24 hours.

Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview

It's helpful to prepare questions ahead of time. Choose 5–7 that feel most relevant to you.

Career Path & Background

- How did you decide on this career?
- What was your major in college?
- How did you get into this field and your current role?
- Why did you take this job?

Industry Insights

- What changes are happening in your industry?
- Is your work seasonal? When is the busiest time?
- What professional associations or publications do you recommend?
- What types of employers hire people for this kind of work?

Daily Work & Responsibilities

- What do you do on a typical day?
- Can you describe your main duties and responsibilities?
- What percentage of your time is spent on different tasks?
- What do you find most rewarding?
- What is the most difficult part of your job?

Job Search & Advancement

- How do people usually find out about job openings in your field?
- What are the entry-level roles?
- What does the career ladder look like?
- Are there opportunities for advancement?
- If you were hiring, what would make a candidate stand out?
- What is the typical entry-level salary range?

Skills, Education & Preparation

- What skills are most important for success in your role?
- What degrees, licenses, or credentials are needed to enter or advance?
- What experiences should students get while still in school?
- What personality traits or values help someone succeed in this field?

Next Steps

- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak with?
- Would you be open to staying in touch?

Important Reminder: Most professionals are happy to help – especially if they know you're seeking advice, not asking for a job. Your goal is to build a relationship that could lead to opportunities in the future.

Networking Tips & Best Practices

- **Treat networking like a game**
 - Make contacts, build relationships, learn essentials, and make friends.
 - It's today's version of the lost art of conversation and letter writing.
- **You have something to offer**
 - Even as a student or new graduate, your curiosity, energy, and perspective are valuable.
 - Everyone starts somewhere – seasoned professionals know this.
- **Honor the networking code**
 - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
 - Return calls, follow up, say thanks, and offer help when you can.
 - You don't have to accept a referral, but always acknowledge and appreciate assistance.
- **Make networking a priority**
 - Networking is the most important job-search tool.
 - Don't stop once you land a job – each contact is a potential resource.
- **Keep track of your contacts**
 - Update them when your job search ends.
 - Check in occasionally – share updates, successes, or self-promotions.
- **Network consistently**
 - Don't wait until you're desperate – treat it like flossing: regular effort keeps it effective.
 - A “cold” network takes time to warm up; consistent contact keeps it ready.
- **Look for hidden opportunities**
 - Networking isn't just for job leads – valuable connections can be within your current company.
- **Ask permission to use a name**
 - Be courteous; ensure your contact approves before mentioning them to others.
- **Send thank-you notes**
 - Shows appreciation, provides updates, and keeps the door open for future interactions.
- **Never stop networking**
 - Even executives enjoy sharing knowledge.
 - As you advance in your career, continue building and maintaining your network.

Now, get out there and NETWORK your way to
SUCCESS!!

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