

NETWORKING GUIDE

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NETWORK YOUR WAY TO YOUR DREAM JOB

You've probably heard the phrase "it's all about who you know." It's never been truer considering today's job market. Networking is THE best job searching tool.

However, don't just focus on networking when you are unemployed. Remember that this is a life-long skill that takes time and effort to develop. Professional relationships are cultivated over time and if properly maintained, could be a valuable resource that leads to your dream job.

Networking allows you to:

- Get more information about particular careers, companies, industries
- Meet others in your field and obtain referrals to other professionals
- Develop professional communication skills

DOES IT *REALLY* WORK?

Absolutely! It is reported that 70% of jobs are found through networking contacts. Focusing your search on applying for jobs found on common internet sites like Monster and CareerBuilder is not an effective use of your time and energy.

A productive job search is one that combines multiple methods, with a special focus on networking and informational interviewing. To learn more about informational interviewing, check out the guide on our website.

The following example highlights how simple, yet powerful, networking can be. Keep in mind that networking can happen anytime, anywhere and with anyone, all you have to do is:

- Be open to possible connections
- Know yourself and have an idea of what your career goals are
- Conduct yourself in an approachable and professional manner

Here's a real-life example:

Student was having a hard time finding a job after graduation. One night she was at the grocery store and ran into a friend from high school. They begin to catch up and Student mentions that she's looking for work in a particular field. Her friend responds that her father works in that same field and is in need of an intern. Student emailed her resume, got an interview, and the rest is history. It's been 4 years and 2 promotions later and the student is still with that company.

Why this worked:

1. Student knew what she wanted
2. The student was out and about, not spending all day on the computer
3. Student was open to talking to people and not shy about being unemployed
4. She had her resume ready and performed well in the interview

WHO CAN I NETWORK WITH?

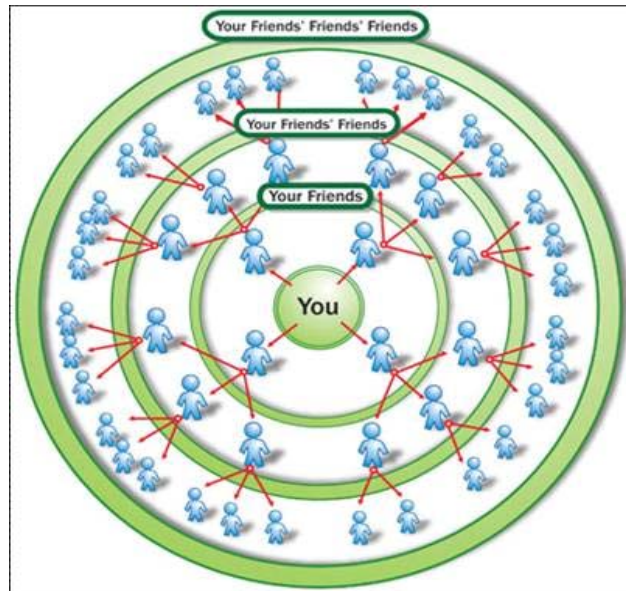
ANYONE! Anyone you come in contact with can be a potential networking connection. Start out small by brainstorming the people closest to you and branch out from there.

We're all linked in some way, so there is a good chance that a possible connection is actually closer than you think.

Parents
Friends
Neighbors

Professors
Classmates
Co-workers

Alumni
Friends' parents
Parents' friends, etc.



WHERE AND HOW?

There are many ways to go about connecting with professionals in your field. Networking can range from spontaneous, informal interactions as seen in the example above, or take place in a more structured environment such as a career fair.

Here are some methods to help you reach out and start networking:

FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING

Informational Interviews (email and phone)

Contacting professionals who work in the field or company you want to break into will give you a wealth of information, in addition to expanding your network. Prepare by coming up with a list of questions for the employer and show them you have a genuine interest in learning more about the company. For more information, check out the Informational Interviewing guide on the Career Services' website.

Informal conversations

Having informal conversations with others can give you a glimpse into the professional world. Treat every conversation as an opportunity to network. Be approachable, yet professional, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Professional Organizations

Joining professional organizations enables you to connect with others in the field you are interested in. It is a good forum to share ideas and tips with one another as well as reach a number of people in your area of interest. Most fields have their own organization with discounted student rates.

Job Fairs

Job fairs allow you the opportunity to network with others. Make sure you prepare beforehand and do your research. Come into the fair knowing who your target audience is and make meaningful connections that will allow you to build a relationship with an employer. For more tips on preparing for a job fair, check out our website.

ONLINE NETWORKING

LinkedIn

This is a great resource to start building your professional network. Create a profile that lets employers know what you are looking for and where you have previously worked. For more tips on building a solid LinkedIn profile, check out our website.

Alumni Mentor Program

The Alumni Mentor Program on College Central is comprised of GMC Alumni who volunteered to share their experiences and offer advice to students looking to break into the same line of work.

Facebook

Facebook is a powerful networking tool to use when looking for a job. Make sure your online profile is professional and shows you in a positive light. Don't be shy about contacting others via Facebook and asking around to see if someone can help you make a connection.

WHAT DO I SAY?

Networking doesn't have to be stressful or intimidating if you know what to say. We suggest developing a "30 second commercial" about yourself to start off a conversation. Think of your commercial as being 2 or 3 sentences about who you are, your professional experience, and future goals. You don't want to sound overly mechanical, but practice your commercial out loud to be sure you feel comfortable.

30 Second Commercial Example: "Hello. I'm Mark Jones, a junior majoring in English at Gwynedd-Mercy College. For the past year I have worked on the student newspaper staff and recently got my own sports column. I am interested in writing for the sports section of a newspaper after graduation, but in the meantime, I'm looking for a journalism internship..."

Email Contact Example: “Hi. My name is Katie Student and I am a business major at Gwynedd-Mercy College. I got your name and email address from family friend, Mrs. Jane Smith. Mrs. Smith informed me that you are an event planner at Cool Company. I am very interested in event planning and I was wondering if you had time to speak with me about your position...”

NETWORKING TIPS

Before you start:

- Practice a 30 second commercial that highlights the main points you are trying to convey during the networking interaction.
- Know that in general, people like to help, offer advice, and talk about their career paths. When in doubt, ask the person questions about themselves to get the conversation started.
- Don't be shy about contacting professionals in your field because chances are they got to where they are now by networking.

During:

- Be authentic, honest, and open with the person you are contacting. Explain briefly your background, what you are doing now, and your future goals.
- Remember that networking takes time and will yield positive results if you put the effort into it. Be prepared to work hard to establish relationships and you will achieve better results.
- Keep in mind that effective networking is not one-sided. Make sure to do your part to keep the lines of communication open and stay up-to-date on new and important aspects of the company.

After:

- Always send thank-you notes after a networking interaction.
- Ask for referrals: “*This has been very helpful, do you know anyone else I could contact about this matter?*”
- If someone gives you the name of a potential networking contact, follow-up with that person. This will help build your network.
- Stay in touch with your contacts from time to time, that way if a job opens up within a company, they will have you in mind as a potential new employee.



Gwynedd-Mercy College