

Building Your Brand: Networking

What is Networking?

Networking is cultivating a meaningful, professional connection which allows you to explore careers, experiences, job/internship opportunities and mentors. It is *the most effective job* search strategy and where the majority of your time and energy should be devoted. Look for opportunities to network: actively participate in on-campus organizations, volunteer with organizations that match your interests and career goals, attend networking events, and consider joining a professional association.

Networking Strategies

1. Create a Search Summary (see search summary example)

- Determine your career focus and what your requirements are in terms of location, industry, size of company. Consider positions that interest you, align with your skills and support your goals. The search summary aids you in your search and keeps you on track in the conversation.
- Practice your elevator pitch (your positioning statement, networking opener) and be confident in your delivery!

2. Develop Career Contacts

- Start with identifying people you regularly interact with: professors, classmates, coaches, friends and family, former employers and supervisors.
- Create a Handshake profile and connect with peers and recruiters.
- Create a LinkedIn profile and connect with professionals in your field of interest.
- Use CUW Connect and reach out to 3-5 alums per day.
- Stay organized and use the *Networking Tracker* and *Job Search Tracker*.

3. The Conversation

- Set up an *informational interview*, which is simply a meeting where you are leading the questions: guidance, advice, mentorship and additional contacts.
 - Send an e-mail to the contact requesting a meeting (face to face or phone).
 - Include a brief introduction of yourself and why you are contacting them.
 - Be flexible with your time and state that you are available to work around their schedule.
- Practice your elevator pitch and be able to answer 'tell me about yourself'.
- Show your interest in the field by researching the person and their organization; prepare well thought out questions.
- Do not ask for a job or internship.
- Stay within the time frame, present search summary, take notes and only furnish your resume upon request.

4. The Follow Up

- At the close of the informational interview ask permission to follow up with additional questions and to keep your connection up to date with your progress.
- Send a thank you email referencing the conversation and appreciation for their time.
- Review your notes, fill out your networking tracker, request a LinkedIn connection

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Networking Example Emails and Questions

1. Meeting Set Up

- E-mail subject line: Sue Smith – Concordia University Student Introduction

Dear Ms. Lopez,

Fred Falcon recommended me reaching out to you. I am a junior studying marketing and communications at Concordia University and I am exploring career paths in these fields. Mr. Falcon thought you would be helpful in my exploration. I have had an internship at ABC company and am involved with our marketing club.

I would like to hear your thoughts on the xyz industry. Would you have time in the next few weeks to meet for a conversation or to speak by phone?

Sincerely,

Sue Smith

Dear Mr. Ellis,

Professor Frances Falcon recommended me reaching out to you for advice on entering the non-profit sector focusing on the arts. I am a sophomore at Concordia University majoring in psychology. I have questions on determining an organizations culture, volunteer work for experience and how to turn your passion into a career. Would you have time in the next few weeks for a conversation?

Sincerely,

Sue Smith

2. Informational Interview Questions to Ask

- Thank you for meeting with me today. I have questions for you, but perhaps I should start by telling you a bit about myself (your elevator pitch).
- Can you tell me how you started out in your field and what was your path to where you are now?
- What do you find most enjoyable about this organization?
- What positions/classes helped you prepare for your current role?
- How did you join this organization?
- What is the future of your industry/field?
- What are the toughest challenges or problems you deal with?
- Do you have advice for students starting out in their career?
- You have been very helpful. Based on our conversation today is there anyone else you believe I should connect with for advice?

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3. Informational Interview Questions to Answer

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are you reading
- What is your favorite class and why?
- Why did you choose Concordia?
- Why do you want to go into xyz industry or why did you choose xyz major?
- How can I help you?