



NETWORKING

Coastal Carolina University – Career Services Center

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

The General Definition:

“The process of interacting with individuals who have interests similar to yours, who are willing to share information about those common interests, or provide the names of others with similar interests.”

The Career Related Definition:

“The process of interacting with individuals who either have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you, who are willing to share information about their position or organization, or provide the names of others who have positions or work for organizations similar to those that interest you. One of the most popular and structured ways this interaction can take place is through an information interview.”

WHY SHOULD I NETWORK?

Networking is a good practice for all facets of life. The more people you know, the more resources you have for information or opportunities that might interest you, career related or otherwise. For career related purposes, networking serves 1 of 2 purposes: to learn more about careers in general and to establish relationships that could indirectly result in a job lead.

- 80% of job vacancies are never advertised. You may only be exposed to 20% of available jobs.
- Most employers would prefer to hire a person referred by a colleague, peer or friend and believe they will be exposed to a higher quality candidate in this manner.
- The overall amount of time it takes for you to find a job can be drastically reduced (estimated to be 4-6 months if you network as opposed to 6-9 months using other job search methods).
- The referral process can put you in contact with key people you might otherwise never meet.
- You learn more about your field of interest and various occupations within it, as well as specific organizations, which may help you in choosing a major or career path. (Through the process of elimination you may rule out certain career fields or positions.)
- Doing information interviews early in your career exploration means you will have a collection of resources to call on when you really are ready to start your job search!
- Your network can be maintained for years to come and be used repeatedly as you go through job changes later in life.

WHEN SHOULD I START?

It's never too late, but the sooner the better! Remember, the earlier you begin, the more resources you will have to call on when you actually need a job. Also, the benefit to starting the process in the freshmen year is that information interviews can help you in choosing a major or career path.

HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF?

Clarify your goals. Write a brief summary of your abilities, interests and values. Be able to talk intelligently about yourself if questions are asked of you. Know *why* you are networking and be prepared to be honest about that with the people with whom you network. Are you just exploring majors and careers, or are you interested in their company specifically for possible future employment? Research the contact's organization as much as you can prior to meeting them.

HOW DO I ESTABLISH MY NETWORK?

- Generate a list of companies you would be interested in learning more about.
- Generate a list of types of positions you think you would enjoy.
- Brainstorm, Categorize and then Prioritize the names of people you think can put you in touch with someone in those companies or positions.

MAKING THE INITIAL CONTACT

1) Commit to a schedule (Calling just 2 people a day is over 500 contacts a year).

2) Make the initial contact (use a *well-rehearsed*, but not forced, phone script).

- Properly introduce yourself and mention the name of the person who referred you.
- Explain the reason for your call. (i.e. to explore careers or learn about their company)
- Do NOT ask for a job - ask for a 20 - 60 minute Information Interview.
(consider each individual when you decide how much time is appropriate to ask for)

3) Send a resume & cover letter confirming the appointment. Explain in the letter that you have enclosed the resume only so that they might review it and give you suggestions as to your qualifications for the industry.

4) Send a thank you letter following the appointment.

THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW

An information interview provides an opportunity for you to learn about yourself and possible career options appropriate for you. The purpose of the visit is to obtain information and establish a relationship that may help you in the future, *not to ask for a job*. The idea is to allow potential employers to be introduced to you in a pleasant, low stress "interview". Ideally, the relationship may lead to future conversations about employment. Remember to dress and act professionally as you are indirectly making an impression about your potential as an employee. While information interviews can be conducted by phone, it will benefit you to meet in person when possible.

- 1) Re-introduce self and re-mention the name of the person who referred you.
- 2) Ask the right questions.
- 3) Sell yourself, but subtly. Be prepared!!
- 4) Ask for copies of organizational literature.
- 5) **Don't forget** to broaden your network by asking for additional contacts or leads.

KEEPING IT ALL IN ORDER

It is a good idea to have some kind of method for documenting and organizing your networking contacts. Suggested methods include: file cards, a 3 ring binder, or a computer database. See the *Networking Contact Sheet* at the end of this handout as a sample.

ESTABLISHING YOUR NETWORK

People you know well:

Your Parents
 Your Friends
 Your Friends' Parents
 Your Parents' Friends
 Classmates (High School & College)
 Neighbors
 Relatives
 Church Members
 People on your Christmas Card List

People related to the industry:

Group and Club Members
 Trade Association Members
 Professional Organization Executives
 Speakers of Meetings You've Attended
 People You've Met at Conferences
 Professors
 Past Supervisors (Work or Internship)
 Past Colleagues / Clients / Business Partners

People who know people:

Local Chamber of Commerce
 Local Bank Managers
 Real Estate Agents
 Car Dealers
 Insurance Agents
 Politicians
 Sales Representatives

Lawyers
 Career Counselors
 Postal Workers
 Local Reporters
 Doctors / Dentists
 Hairdressers
 Teachers

Alumni
 Supermarket Cashiers
 Restaurant Owners
 Local Merchants
 Travel Agents
 Clergy / Church Leaders
 Accountants/Stockbrokers

EXERCISE: On a separate piece of paper, brainstorm some potential contacts and categorize them into the areas above. Don't forget to prioritize them before making calls.

USE CAUTION!

A recent report in the National Business Employment Weekly indicates that executives and key managers are annoyed with the popular informational interview phenomena. Particularly, that the individuals making these inquiries are devious regarding their intent and unprepared for the interview. Try the following suggestions to help you get an information interview avoid "turning off" the person you are meeting:

1. Before contacting a key person, you should have some rationale for making the appointment. That is, you should have read at some length about the field and have some insights into your values, skills, and interests, and how they relate to that field.
2. Be honest when making this appointment. . . your goal is *not* for a job interview, but to gather "hands on" information about a career area so as to make a better decision in choosing a career path . . .communicate this to the person on whom you are calling.
3. If you *are* in a formal job search and want to explore a specific job or work area, be honest. Indicate your interest in discussing your past work experiences and some of your present and future work interests. Indicate, however that you are not expecting a job offer, but welcome the person's observations, critiques, and any suggestions related to the field or career area he or she represents.
4. If you find yourself in an information interview and it becomes obvious that the other person wants to shift the conversation into an impromptu job interview, proceed with caution. You should indicate your genuine enthusiasm and interest for that type of interview, but might suggest doing it at a later time, since the person might be testing your honesty. You may also want to suggest that he or she provide you with a description of

the job he or she is potentially thinking about for you at the end of the interview. Only after clarifying that the person you are talking with is changing the nature of the interview, should you willingly proceed into a job interview.

THE INITIAL CONTACT – A SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

“Mr. Johnson. Hi. My name is Michael Smith and I am student of Dr. Bob Robins. Dr. Robins suggested that I contact you as someone that I could speak with about various career paths in the field of _____. Could I have just 2 minutes of your time?”

“Sure.”

“Thanks. I will be graduating from USC in May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering; and at this point, I am trying to gather information about various companies and the types of positions each company has so I can better prepare for my upcoming job search. I can appreciate that you probably keep a busy schedule, but I wondered if you might have between 30 or 45 minutes that I could sit down and talk with you about your experiences in the field.”

“I’d be happy to Michael, when did you have in mind?”

“Well, I do have classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, but beyond that I’ll be happy to meet with you at your convenience.”

“Alright, I can squeeze you next Tuesday afternoon at 4pm.”

“Wonderful, next Tuesday, March 2 nd , at 4pm. Where shall I meet you?”

“I’m located in the Highland Towers on Broward Street. The directions are....”

“Okay, I think I can find that. In the meantime, I’d like to send you a copy of my resume so you’ll have a chance to look it over my background before we meet and perhaps give me some feedback on it. Is there an address I should mail it to?”

“Certainly, that address is....”

“Wonderful. I look forward to meeting with you next Tuesday at 4:00 and I’ll get that resume in the mail to you. Thank you for your time, Mr. Johnson. I appreciate it and I look forward to your insights.”

WHAT MAKES THIS A GOOD CALL?

- Caller immediately states that she is seeking information about various career paths in the contact’s field, as opposed to asking for a job.
- Caller, not knowing what she might have interrupted, asks if she may have 2 minutes of his time.
- Although the caller might actually be well into her job search, she nevertheless indicates that she is simply seeking information about companies to prepare her for *later* job searching.
- Caller acknowledges up-front that she understands the contact’s busy schedule and states that she is willing to meet at his convenience.
- Caller confirms the time and date of the appointment, and that she will mail a copy of her resume.
- In addition to her “thank you”, caller lets the contact know she appreciates his time *and* his opinions.

NOTE - Caller could also ask for referrals at this time, but may get a better response by asking this at the end of the information interview.

THE “INFORMATION INTERVIEW” (sample questions)

(Where you read “this organization” substitute the actual name of the organization in your question)

Company Overview

- What are the functions of your organization / department? What does your organization do?
- What products or services does this organization produce?
- Can you tell me about the background / history of this organization?
- Who are your customers?
- Who are your competitors? Where do you rank among the competition?
- What unique factors would you say set this organization apart from others?
- Do you have any organizational literature that would help me to learn more about this company?
- What values or philosophy does this organization claim to have?
- How are decisions made in this organization / your department (team effort/empowerment or top-down)?
- What basic assumptions or beliefs would you say are shared and supported by people in this industry or organization?

Position(s) Overview

- What do you do in a typical workday or workweek in *your* position?
- What positions do you supervise (if any)?
- What are some of the other types of positions in this industry?
- What type of entry-level positions would exist in this field / organization for someone just graduating from college?
- Do you have a copy of an organizational chart that would show me the progression of jobs from beginning to the top, as well as the reporting and supervision lines?
- Do you have any information on job specifications or job descriptions that I could have?

Occupational / Organizational Interests

- How did you personally get interested in this field?
- What attracted you to this organization / company in particular?

Working Conditions

- What obligations do your work place upon you outside the standard 40 hour work week?
- Are there any travel obligations with your position?
- If there is overtime, is it due more to the nature of this field or the nature of this particular organization?
- How do your work requirements balance with your family / personal commitments?
- Can you leave work at work, or do you take work home with you?
- What is the typical dress code in this industry / at this organization?
- Can you speak about such factors as noise level, privacy, company morale, physical surroundings, and the overall environment (i.e. is it tense or familial, high pressure or laid back)?
- What compromises or trade-offs are there in your career field (ethical, financial, etc.)?

Compensation

- What range of salaries is appropriate for the various positions in your organization? (entry, mid-level and top salaries)
- Do salary ranges vary by employer or region? How does your organization compare to the competition?
- What types of benefits are associated with this organization? (investments, education reimbursement, bonuses, etc.)

Advancement Opportunities

- What is the typical career path of someone in this organization? What is the time-line associated with that career path?
- What opportunities exist internally for advancement or change of position.

Outlook of the Company / Field

- Have there been any noticeable trends in this industry?
- What is the outlook for this field / organization regarding growth, advancement or upcoming changes in general?
- What is the demand and security level for employees in this field/organization?

Satisfaction Level

- What do you find most rewarding about your work? Least rewarding?
- If you were ever to leave this kind of work, what would the reason be?
- Are your major frustrations internal or external factors?

Job Preparation / Requirements

- What specific skills or aptitudes would someone need to enter this field?
- What personal qualities or attributes (temperament, attitudes, values, beliefs, etc.) seem to serve a person well in this type of work?
- What expectations does this organization have of its employees?
- What special training or specific education (degree or coursework) is required? Is a graduate degree required?
- What kind of part-time work experience could help someone to prepare for this field?
- Are any particular licenses or certifications essential in this field?
- My strongest interests involve (fill in the blank). Would this job allow me to use these skills?
- How well suited is my background for this kind of work?
- Are there any special problems or concerns someone considering this kind of work should prepare for?

Related Fields

- What fields (if any) do people seem to “shift from” and do well in your career area?
- What fields (if any) do people leave this industry to pursue?
- What other fields are related to this one?

Job Search Techniques

- How did you get your position in this organization?
- What steps did you take to get from your initial position to where you are now? (if advancement took place)
- What do you suggest is the best strategy for obtaining an entry-level position in this field?
- How/where are most positions for this organization or this industry advertised?

Advice / Recommendations

- What would you advise people entering into this kind of career?
- What should a person look for in an organization such as this as they consider positions?
- Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
- Do you have any suggestions about my interpersonal skills?
- Are there any questions I didn't ask that you feel I should?
- Would you mind if I contacted you / met with you again in the future if I need more advice or information?

Referrals (don't forget!!)

- Based on our conversation today, is there anyone else you think would be helpful for me to talk with to get more information about this field or organization?
- May I mention your name as the person who referred me?
- Would you be willing to let them know I will be in contact with them?

NETWORKING CONTACT SHEET

NAME:

POSITION:

COMPANY:

***1st SOURCE:**

***2nd SOURCE:**

***3rd SOURCE:**

WORK ADDRESS, PHONE & E-MAIL:

HOME ADDRESS, PHONE & E-MAIL:

INFORMATION ON THIS CONTACT & HIS / HER RELATIONSHIP TO THE SOURCE:

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS GIVEN TO ME BY THIS CONTACT:

APPOINTMENTS, INTERVIEWS OR PHONE INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED WITH CONTACT:

DIRECTIONS:

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- ***
- 1st SOURCE (who I got the contact's name from)**
 - 2nd SOURCE (who I got the 1st sources name from)**
 - 3rd SOURCE (who I got the 2nd sources name from)**

ACTION LOG

DATE:	ACTION TAKEN:	NEXT STEP:
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CALLED:	SENT RESUME:	INTERVIEWD:	SENT THANK YOU:
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