

NETWORKING

Why is Networking Important?

Eighty percent of all jobs are unadvertised, but they get filled. One out of every two jobs is obtained via networking.

Perception and Reality

Good networking requires showing a genuine interest in others, taking time to acquire and nurture relationships, and developing the ability to see a connection with someone you just met. Usually students begin networking only when they need something and need it quickly. Professional career counselors recommend starting early in your college career to learn the ropes of networking. Your classmates, your professors, friends of your family—all these people are part of your network, just as you are part of theirs. You may not realize it, but you probably already network. When you ask fellow students what is the best class to take you are doing one type of networking: gathering information. You may even network around career issues informally when you discuss with others what major to choose, or what student clubs to join.

Once you get your feet wet with gathering information, you can try out other modes of networking. Meeting with Center for Career and Civic Engagement staff, professors, employers at company presentations and career fairs, are all networking, too. These professionals are committed to helping you find your career path. Talking with them and with other students allows you to find out what type of jobs are available, what an organization's culture is like, how to apply for positions at various organizations, and how to get in touch with recruiters outside the Lehigh Valley area.

Success Story

One recent Moravian College success story involved a student contacting a Moravian College alumna to do an informational interview. The alumna was impressed by the student and asked for her résumé. The alumna received the résumé and invited the student to interview for a position in New York. The student was offered the position. As you can see, this all happened because of the student's willingness to network.

The Office of Alumni Engagement, the Center for Career and Civic Engagement, and academic departments provide a variety of events that will allow you to network. Look into these events, which are usually offered every semester. You can identify people to network with on LinkedIn by joining Moravian College alumni and Center for Career and Civic Engagement groups.

Informational Interviewing: The Best Way to Start Networking

Informational interviewing is done to gather key information about careers and to make connections with individuals in those careers. Informational interviewing is gathering information that will help you in your career choice.

One of the best sources for gathering information about what's happening in an occupation or an industry is to talk to people working in the field. This process is called informational interviewing. An informational interview is an interview that you initiate. The purpose is to obtain information rather than to get a job.

Reasons to Conduct Informational Interviewing

There are a variety of reasons to conduct informational interviews. Here are some of them:

- To explore careers and clarify your career goal.
- To discover employment opportunities that are not advertised.
- To expand your professional network.
- To build confidence for later job interviews.
- To access the most up-to-date career information.
- To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses.

Steps to Follow to Conduct an Informational Interview

- Identify The Occupation Or Industry You Wish to Learn About.
Assess your own interests, abilities, values, and skills, and evaluate labor conditions and trends to identify the best fields to research.
- Prepare For The Interview.
Read all you can about the field before the interview. Decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation or industry. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.
- Identify People to Interview.
Start with lists of people you already know: alumni, friends, relatives, fellow students, current or former co-workers, supervisors and neighbors. Professional organizations, the Yellow Pages and organizational directories are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for a contact by job title.
- Arrange The Interview.
Contact the person to set up an interview:
 - by telephone
 - by email followed by a telephone call
 - by having someone who knows the person make the appointment for you
- Conduct The Interview.
Dress appropriately (if meeting the person face-to-face), arrive or call on time, be polite and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion. Be sure to ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you. Ask permission to use your contact's name when approaching these individuals.
- Follow Up.
Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within 24 hours.

QUESTIONS

Prepare a list of your own questions for your informational interview. Here are some sample questions:

- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
- What training or education is required for this type of work? Are there basic prerequisites beyond education and training (e.g., certification, qualifying exams, etc.)?
- What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? most challenging?
- How did you get your job?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
- What entry level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
- What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
- What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- What do you think of the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
- From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
- Are there any resources related to the career field that you can suggest that would be good for me to read?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?
- Would you be willing to take a look at my résumé and make suggestions on how to improve it?
- Who do you know that I should also talk to? When I call him or her, may I use your name?

—Adapted from <http://danenet.wicip.org/jets/jet-9407-p.html>