Networking Guidelines

Networking is at the core of every effective career search.

Networking, done properly, is about relationship building. It is essential that you are gracious and kind in your approach, and show appreciation for any amount of time somebody gives you.

It takes time to network. Networking can lead you in directions you hadn’t yet thought of, and can open up new targets to pursue. Networking can be useful to obtain insider information about companies, advice to better help you focus your search, how to be more targeted in marketing yourself; and to acquire referrals to other deeper contacts closer to the actual jobs. This will help your chances of being remembered when job openings arise and/or before they are even advertised. This is known as the Hidden Job Market.

You are networking every day; especially while in business school. Remember that you are always “on.” Think of the GSM as a Networking Incubator. Be courteous and professional to all you meet while here: classmates, faculty, staff, friends of the school are all potential future colleagues with whom to network. The people you engage at the GSM could very well stay in your network for the rest of your life – start off on the right foot. Remember that people do business with people they know. The trick is to be known by a lot of people. Networking allows you to meet people without asking them for a job and putting them on the spot. If you’re really building strong relationships, those in your network will inform you if they have or hear of a job that is appropriate for you.

Elevator Pitch

This will become the communication backbone of your search and will be used constantly throughout your networking endeavors. Essentially, it summarizes who you in a concise manner, what you have to offer and what you are seeking. It consists of your educational and professional backgrounds, relevant accomplishments and/or benefits you can offer and your search objective. You will use it in phone calls, emails, cover letters, at networking events, in informational interviews and of course in hiring interviews when they start with “tell me about yourself”.

Keep your audience in mind, and tailor it to fit the situation: are you casually chatting with a classmate or are you introducing yourself to a potential hiring manager at a conference? With whom are you speaking and what is the environment or setting? Try to keep it conversational and natural, not like a memorized script. The reality is each time you use it, it will and should sound different, but with the key points that you’re trying to convey. Write it out on paper then practice on some friends or family to get it polished.
Things to Keep In Mind

Start talking with all your classmates, professors, staff members at the GSM, your family and friends and club members. Networking can be done everywhere, all the time, in the line at the grocery store, at work, in class, during breaks, etc. Be a good listener and be sincere. The most effective networking is done in person, followed up with electronic interaction via social media platforms, especially LinkedIn.

If you start with electronic means, you can use LinkedIn or your alumni databases to find contacts you want to reach out to. Then you can send them a concise email to request interaction. A Sample Informational Interview Request can be found on our website. Be conscientious of their busy schedules, so offer to exchange information by email, telephone or in person, whichever best suits them. Once you have successfully scheduled a time for an informational interview, or they have agreed to email exchanges, take extra effort to prepare (in advance for a meeting, and preparing well thought out emails for exchanges). Do your research on the industry, company and the person. Then prepare smart questions relevant to the level of your contact.

How To Tips

1. Attend mixers, conferences, events. ENGAGE. Become a resource for others. Seek out referrals when appropriate. Read the Career Development E-Newsletter that goes out every Monday to keep you up to date on all upcoming networking events. If you miss it, it is housed on our website here.
2. Volunteer – become known in industry circles; help out at conferences; show potential employers what you’re capable of achieving and that you’re a hard worker.
3. Give Back – when you meet somebody new and have a connection, reach out periodically with something that might interest them, such as sending them an article via an email. Simple gestures will go a long way!
4. Immerse yourself in researching the industry and companies you are seeking. Be ready to have an intelligent conversation about the company.
5. Keep your resume updated and relevant to what your target employers are seeking – don’t just apply to postings, but rather track the skills that are consistently being listed in company postings. Are they on your resume?
6. Consider focusing on smaller organizations – smaller organizations tend to have fewer levels of bureaucracy and often smaller HR departments to screen you out. It is often easier to identify the hiring manager and other decision makers in these smaller companies. They may have greater flexibility for creating projects or positions for you, if you’re the right fit.
7. Manage your on-line identity. Google yourself and make sure everything on the web about you in professional. Take care when using social media tools to Network. Up to a point, these tools can be very effective in your job search. Just don’t use them exclusively and avoid engaging in person with others.

LinkedIn Tips

8. Covert Job Search: If you don’t want your connections to be notified that you have updated your profile you need to address 2 sections under ‘settings’: 1) go to ‘turn on/off your activity broadcasts’ and make sure it is unchecked then 2) go to ‘Select who can see your activity feed’ and select ‘only you’. This is important if you do not want your current employer (via any of your connections) know that you are updating your profile and hence may be looking for a new job.

9. Open Job Search: Conversely, if you are actively looking and want everybody to know, under ‘settings’ 1) go to ‘turn on/off your activity broadcasts’ and make sure it is checked then 2) go to ‘Select who can see your activity feed’ and select ‘everyone’.

10. Photo: Use a professional looking head shot – such as your GSM one if you like it, or something else in a suit or business casual.

11. Recommendations: A marketing manager at LinkedIn came to the GSM to give a presentation and he said that recruiters are looking to this more than ever- they actually say they like to see 2 recommendations per job if possible. Write some recommendations for people you know and they will be more inclined to reciprocate.

12. Headline: should start taking you in the direction you are seeking.

13. Summary: Use your Elevator Pitch to copy and paste into a Summary section.

14. Job Descriptions: see if you want to copy and paste bullets from your resume OR turn the bullets into a small paragraph of the most impressive accomplishments - basically revisit your profile for consistency with your resume.

15. Add everyone you know and meet going forward so it will be a better networking tool for you. Remember that it is just as beneficial for people to be connected with you as you are with them. It’s the whole reason people are ON LinkedIn and why they use it.

16. Follow Companies: Search for and ‘Follow’ companies that interest you via LinkedIn – you will get updates on people who have recently vacated positions, and all the company updates.

17. Here is a good abridged excerpt from Fortune Magazine 2010: “Facebook is for fun. Tweets have a short shelf life. If you’re serious about managing your career, the only social site that really matters is LinkedIn. In today’s job market an invitation to ”join my professional network” has become more useful than swapping business cards. More than 60 million members have logged on to create profiles, upload their employment histories, and build connections with people they know. Visitors to the site include your customers. Your colleagues. Your competitors. Your boss. And being on LinkedIn puts you in the
company of people with impressive credentials: The average member is a college-educated 43-year-old making $107,000. More than a quarter are senior executives. Every Fortune 500 company is represented. That's why recruiters rely on the site to find even the highest-caliber executives: Oracle found CFO Jeff Epstein via LinkedIn in 2008.”

Next Steps

Draft your Elevator Pitch since you will be delivering this many times. Also, start thinking about your network and your first steps to start expanding it.

In closing, people by nature will want to try to help you, if you are sincere, well-prepared and respectful of their time. You are trying to grow relationships with others. Networking is a powerful job hunting tool, if used correctly. Take the time to develop your networking skills, and focus on what you can offer others, you will see your network flourish.