

Business Career Services

Department of Business Administration and Economics

NETWORKING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

WHAT IS IT? Networking involves meeting new people, sharing your career goals, and asking for guidance and information from working professionals. There are two forms of networking: social and professional. The purpose of this handout is to expose you to professional networking. In addition to gathering information, networking may allow you to uncover employment leads. Remember that networking is a process and that you may need to contact many people in order to realize the true benefits.

You should not be afraid of networking or conducting informational interviews with people working in your fields of interest. People typically enjoy talking about themselves and sharing what they do with others. Networking can be as informal as a conversation with someone you already know or as formal as an appointment to speak with a new contact (an informational interview). As long as you are prepared with meaningful questions, networking in any situation can be both easy and beneficial.

HOW DO I NETWORK? Your network is probably much larger than you think. In order to identify the resources in your network it is important to have goals. If you are interested in learning about career opportunities in accounting it helps to make a list of people you know that are accountants. What if you don't know any accountants? Think of people you do know who might have some contact with accountants. Once you develop your list, start to think of questions you want to ask the contact. Remember, the first contact might not always be able to give you the information or opportunity you are looking for, however, they might be able to send you in the right direction so don't be afraid to ask.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

- Browse the Career Connection database. This database lists hundreds of alumni who are excited about sharing information related to their career fields.
<http://www.brockport.edu/career/connection.htm>
- Attend campus events where you will find speakers in your field of interest.
- Speak to faculty, friends, and family too.....these are often great places to begin.
- Contact Jeff Taylor, Director of Business Careers services if you are interested in speaking with an alumnus/a at jdtaylor@brockport.edu.

TIPS AND ETIQUETTE:

- Review Career Services online workshop, "How to Work a Room."
http://www.brockport.edu/career/workshops_online.htm
- Contacting someone to meet in person can be done either by phone or e-mail. Make sure if you send an e-mail that you reread it for errors. If you are going to make a phone call make sure you are in a quiet place so that you will be heard.
- Your actual meeting should be either by phone or face-to-face. While networking is not a formal job interview you should always maintain professional conduct.
- Be sure to send thank you notes to anyone you network with. Showing gratitude for someone's time is an important part of the networking process that should not be overlooked!

COMMON QUESTIONS:

Questions can help you structure conversations making you more confident and able to obtain constructive information. Your questions should be based around your personal career goals and interests. Consider some of the sample questions below.

Questions About Your Interviewee's Job:

- What is your exact job title?
- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job? What is a typical day like?
- Are the demands of your job specific to this company, or would anyone on this career be expected to put in the same hours?
- What constraints, such as time and funding, make your job more difficult?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? Least satisfying?

General Questions About Your Interviewee's Career Field:

- What are the typical entry-level job titles and function?
- What is the employment outlook like in your career field? How much demand is there for people in this career?
- What are the opportunities in this career like in (geographical area you are most interested in)?
- What entry-level jobs offer the best opportunities for learning?
- What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?
- What do you find unique about your career field?

Questions About Preparing For This Career:

- What are the educational requirements for this job?
- What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your job?
- What courses do you wish you had taken that would have better prepared you?
- If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way to better facilitate entry?
- What work-related values are most highly esteemed in this company (security, high income, variety, independence)?
- What kind of training program does the company offer? Is it highly structured or more informal?

Networking is an important part of your search for a meaningful career. It is an excellent way to increase your knowledge of a career field as well as learn about specific opportunities. As long as you are in touch with your personal career goals, prepared with questions and a professional attitude, networking will be a rewarding part of your career development.

For more information or help finding contacts call Business Career Services:

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