



Networking/Information Interviewing

AUBURN UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER

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NETWORKING

Networking is a systematic development and cultivation of informal interpersonal contacts and relationships. It is a way to gather information, further focus your job search objectives and learn about trends in the field. Networking is often a first point of contact with professionals in your field of interest. It allows professional relationship building to occur even before you actually enter the field.

Networking can be as casual as saying, "Can I ask you a few questions about how you got into _____?", or it can be as formal as arranging an appointment. Consider the relationship you already have with the contact person and choose your approach accordingly. Whatever your preference, keep in touch with the contacts and utilize their information to find the career or jobs you desire.

Networking Helps You...

- Gain knowledge of specific jobs and career options
- Make contacts for referrals in the job search process
- Obtain information to include in cover letters and resumes
- Acquire knowledge to use in responding to interview questions
- Increase confidence in your chosen field
- Learn behaviors of professionals in your field

WHO OR WHAT IS A "CONTACT"?

Every person you know is a contact. Try to involve individuals who can give you information and contacts on careers, referrals, trends and the politics involved with job options that you are considering for a career. Here is a list to help you get started:

- Family members
- Friends (school, email, Facebook, etc.)
- Co-workers from your last five jobs
- People at the gym or intramural field
- Salespeople with whom you interact
- Maintenance workers attending to your apartment/house
- People you meet at the grocery store, bank, etc
- Your barber/hairdresser, manicurist, physical trainer, etc
- Wait staff and managers at your favorite restaurants
- Your walking, exercise, etc partners
- Doctors, dentists, etc
- Professors, instructors, staff, advisors, etc
- People at church, synagogue, mosque, etc
- People who are in the same social or service organization
- Casual acquaintances from parties
- New introductions

Every person you meet, stumble across, or blunder into, during your job-hunt, whose name, email address, and phone number you have the grace to ask for, is a contact. (*Always* have the grace to ask for it.)

Bolles, R. N. (2004). *What Color is Your Parachute?* (pp. 227-228) Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press

WHERE DO YOU NETWORK?

Technically, you can network anywhere. The woman in front of you in the grocery store check out line, may hold your dream position. However, Auburn Alumni are a great way to build your professional network. Utilize the following methods of networking with Auburn Alums:

ALUM Network - aualum.org/aoc/ - Auburn alumni may post available jobs and search for available positions.

Auburn Clubs - aualum.org/clubs/ - There are clubs located in 24 states. Join one and get to know professionals and alumni in the area.

Social Media outlets such as Twitter and LinkedIn are also growing areas for professional networking. LinkedIn allows you to connect with alumni but also with people based on mutual career areas of interest, place of employment, professional organization memberships, etc. Tips on preparing a LinkedIn profile and navigating the site are available at tigersprepare.blogspot.com.

You may also network at professional organization meetings, civic organizations and local leadership programs. Proactively seek opportunities!

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational interviewing is a popular and effective method of collecting information on a career field from professionals currently in that area. It should assist you in making your career choice by gaining a more realistic insight into your career area of interest and to network with professionals. It is not, however, a job-seeking method.

Informational interviewing helps you...

- Sharpen your perception of the career you are researching, thus helping you make more educated career decisions
- Develop contacts
- Measure your compatibility with the people, environment and general lifestyles surrounding a certain career

STEPS TO CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Preparation:

- Be informed about your career of interest utilizing Career Center resources in the office and at auburn.edu/career
- Develop a list of questions
- Start with people you are familiar with and practice
- Contact individual well in advance to schedule an appointment
- Be prepared to respond to questions from contact

During:

- Refer to your list of questions if you need to, it shows you are prepared
- Make positive first impressions through appearance, social skills and punctuality
- Observe work environment, people, dress, etc.
- Thank everyone for their time and assistance
- Ask for business cards and two or three other contacts

Networking and Informational Interview Questions

- How did you get started in this industry? What is your educational background and what previous work experience have you had?
- What short- and long-term trends affect your industry?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of your position and this industry as a whole?
- What are the major rewards of your job?
- What are the major frustrations you encounter on your job? How do you deal with them?
- What fringe benefits are offered on your job?

- Based on my research, I see that the average salary range is \$___ to \$___. Would you say that is accurate?
- Who are the recognized leaders in this industry?
- What professional associations represent this industry?
- Is there another professional I should talk with about careers/trends in this field?
- What are some other good sources of information about this industry - articles, reports, journals, people?
- What are the current career opportunities in this field?
- In this industry, is it more likely that I will be hired through a direct application on-line or via a referral from a current employee?
- What skills, experience or other qualifications are sought by employers in this field for entry-level employees?
- What is the typical career path for entry-level hires?
- Of your organization's hires the last three years, what qualities, backgrounds or achievements did they have that made them attractive candidates?
- Is training typically formal or on-the-job training?
- (Offer a copy of your resume.) Could I get your opinion on my resume? What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see in my qualifications?
- Can I call you if I have further questions or to check with you about news and leads in the field?

“Networking.” National Business Employment Weekly: 1994

Follow-up:

- Summarize information you gathered
- Send a thank you email that day and a written note the following day
- Keep contact informed if they expressed interest
- Contact new leads