



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.

Your strategy should 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. Basically, everyone is a contact. Consider the following people in your life: family members, friends, friends' parents, professors, advisors, directories, publications, professional associations, civic groups, church members, etc.

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 phoning to arrange 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

Auburn Alumni are a great way to build your professional network. Utilize the following methods of networking with Auburn Alums.

ALUM Network

<http://www.aualum.org/aoc/>

This is a place where Auburn Alumni post available jobs and Auburn grads can search for available positions.

Auburn Clubs

<http://www.aualum.org/clubs/>

There are clubs located in 24 states. Join one and get to know professionals and alumni in the area.

Who or What is a "Contact"?

Every person you know is a contact.

- Every member of your family.
- Every friend of yours.
- Every person in your address book.
- Every person on your Christmas-card list.
- Every person you met at any party you attended in the last year or two.
- Every co-worker from your last five jobs.
- Every person you know at your gym/athletic place.
- Every person you know on any athletic team.
- Every merchant or salesperson you ever deal with.
- Every person who comes to your apartment/house to do any kind of repairs or maintenance work.
- Every person you meet at the supermarket/bank.
- Every check-out clerk you know.
- Every gas station attendant you know.
- Everyone who does personal work on you: your barber, hairdresser, manicurist, physical trainer, body worker, and the like.
- The waiters, waitresses, and manager of your favorite restaurants.
- All the people you meet on the Internet. All the people whose email addresses you have.
- Every leisure partner you have, as for walking, exercising, swimming, or whatever.
- Every doctor, or medical professional you know.
- Every professor, teacher, etc. you once knew or maybe still know how to get a hold of.
- Every person in your church, synagogue, mosque, or religious assembly.
- Everyone you know in Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, or other service organizations.
- Every person you know via group memberships.
- Every person you are newly introduced to.
- Every person you meet, stumble across, or blunder into, during your job-hunt, whose name, address, and phone number you have the grace to ask for. (*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.

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 a job-seeking method.

Informational Interviewing Helps You...

- Sharpen your perception of the career you are researching, thus helping you make more educated future 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 interest by researching on the internet and CDS resources
- Develop a list of questions
- Start with people you are familiar with—practice
- Contact individual ahead of time 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, etc.
- Thank everyone for their time and assistance
- Ask for their business card and two or three other contacts

Follow-up:

- Summarize information you gathered
- Send a thank you note within the week
- Keep contact informed if they expressed interest
- Contact new leads

Networking and Informational Interview Questions

- How did you get started in this business? 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? What is a possible salary range for someone in your occupation?
- 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 field of work, how is employment achieved, through direct application by the potential employee or through the network of current employees?
- 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 for your positions?
- Is training with your firm 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