

Networking

- ✓ **Make Contacts**
- ✓ **Create Alliances**
- ✓ **Build Connections**



The University of Texas at Austin
Career Services
College of Natural Sciences

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Networking

Although networking is one of the most successful ways to find a job or internship, it can often seem intimidating. However, networking is simply making contacts, creating alliances, building support groups and seeking out other professionals within your field(s) of interest. Many position openings are not advertised, but rather, filled by word-of-mouth (this is called: *the hidden job market*). Networking is an essential part of career development and can potentially lead you to a job or internship!

WHAT IS IT?

Networking is merely a tool that is used to build relationships. The act of networking happens between people who exchange ideas, information, and contacts. The process of networking includes rapport building, a mutual trust and outcomes that are beneficial to all parties involved. Networking is not always about finding a job, although it can often be a very successful job searching tool.

What networking is *NOT*

- A plea for a job
- A one-way exchange
- A job interview
- Only beneficial for one person

Networking is a way of life versus an activity with particular start and end dates. Use it as a means to learn about different occupations/industries, employment prospects, graduate programs, or to prepare for a job interview.

PREPARE

Self-Assess

Before you can begin networking, it is important to know yourself. Self-assessment is an ongoing process, but begin by asking yourself:

- What are my interests, goals, and aspirations?
- What are my skills and strengths in relation to a career?
- What am I looking for in a job?

Within the networking process you may be asked to communicate what you know about yourself in relation to a job, internship, industry, etc. The more you know about yourself, the more successful your networking experience will be.

Resume

Prepare a resume that includes all of your experiences, skills, and qualifications. Be sure that your resume has been proofread and is free of any typos or spelling errors. Your contacts may want your resume so that they can connect with you in the future. You want to make a positive impression by providing a clean, tailored resume that proves to a contact that you are serious about the networking interaction.

Tip: Make an appointment with a Career Coach in the Career Services Office if you would like assistance in creating a resume or having an existing one reviewed.



Research

Before contacting someone for networking purposes, be sure to conduct research on the person, the company, industry, position, etc. This will not only prove that you have taken the time to learn details about your contact, but this will also allow for deeper, more meaningful conversation. Sometimes networking is impromptu or spontaneous, in which case research is not an option. However, when possible, do as much research as you can.

Questions

Create a list of questions that you would like to ask your contact(s). Questions should be prepared for networking interactions that are both planned and impromptu. Planned questions are relevant for a meeting, informational interview, or job fair. Other questions are for impromptu networking interactions such as an event, mixer, workshop, etc. In preparing some general questions, you are ready to talk to anyone at any given time. This will help you feel more confident and engaged, and in return, allow for a more beneficial networking experience.

Sample questions for a planned meeting:

- What attracted you to this field?
- What do you most like about this position or field?
- What do you least like about this position or field?
- Describe a typical day or week.
- How typical is your job compared to other jobs in the industry?
- What steps did you take to break into this field?
- What skills and attributes are most helpful in your job?
- What are typical career paths and salary levels in your field?
- To what professional associations do you belong?
- What are some related jobs or fields?
- How do you think my skill set would best fit in your field?
- What advice would you give somebody interested in pursuing your line of work?
- Who else might be able to share their experience of this field with me?

Sample questions for an impromptu meeting (if you were at an event, mixer, workshop, etc.):

- What do you like the most about _____ (city)?
- What brought you here (to the event, mixer, workshop, etc.)?
- How do you know the host of this event?
- How did you decide on your career path?
- I am very interested in your field, could I contact you in the future to find out more about how you got into your position?
- Can you recommend other colleagues with whom I can speak? May I use your name when I contact them?

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech should be prepared for networking situations where you need to summarize who you are and what your interests are in a short period of time. The elevator speech is really just a 30 second statement introducing yourself with a few key facts designed to generate a conversation with someone. This is perfect for impromptu networking, job fairs, workshops or events where you can start conversing with individuals at any given time.



Example:

“Hi, my name is _____, and I am a senior Environmental Sciences major at UT Austin. I’m looking for a position that will allow me to use my research and analysis skills. Over the past few years, I’ve been strengthening these skills through my work with a local watershed council on conservation strategies to support water quality and habitats. Eventually, I’d like to develop education programs on water conservation awareness. I read that your organization is involved in water quality projects. Can you tell me how someone with my experience may fit into your organization?”

CONTACT

Now that you have prepared, you are ready to identify and contact individuals you would like to network with. Here are some ideas:

Possible Network Contacts

- Friends, family, neighbors, co-workers
- Professors, school administrators, alumni
- People you know through clubs, sports teams or other community activities
- Former employers, internship supervisors, volunteer work coordinators, coaches
- Professional and social organizations members
- Social media connections

Making the Contact

- Can be in person, over the phone, via email or social media
- Tailor the way you contact someone (addressing your friends and family will be different than a professional)
- Be clear! Clearly communicate your goals and/or needs so your contact(s) understand what it is you are asking of them

Examples

Sample phone call:

“Hi Ms. Andrews,
 This is Susan Student. I’m a sophomore at The University of Texas at Austin, and ____ (referral person) suggested I contact you. I’m calling because I’m interested in Health Education, and I’d like to talk to you about your experiences in the field. Could we set up a time to talk for about 15 minutes? I understand that you are very busy, so I am willing to be flexible to accommodate your schedule as needed.”

Sample e-mail:

Date: November 15, 20XX

Subject: Informational Interview Request

Dear Ms. Andrews:

Alexa Longhorn, Assistant Dean for Natural Sciences at XYZ University, suggested that I contact you and asked me to pass along her regards. I understand that you specialize in Health Education and I am particularly interested in



learning more about your work with the Healthcare Education Program. I hope to pursue a career in this field upon graduation from The University of Texas at Austin next spring.

Over the past two years, I have worked as an intern at XYZ Company. I worked collaboratively with my colleagues to develop programs and workshops that met the needs of our community. This experience has sparked and strengthened my interest in Health Education. Last summer, I partnered with XYZ Company on advocacy efforts at our state capitol. I plan to remain in Austin after graduation and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your current project, as well as the various career paths one could take in Health Education. I realize that you are on a tight schedule and I would greatly appreciate any time that you could spare to meet with me. I will be leaving for winter break on December 13th; it would be great to meet with you before that date, if possible. I will give your office a call next week to see if we can arrange a convenient time to talk. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,
Betty Bevo

Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science
UT Austin, Class of XXXX
betty@austin.utexas.edu
512.555.1234

Sample LinkedIn connection:

Subject: College of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Seeking Career Advice

Dear Ms. Andrews:

I am a senior Human Development major at UT Austin and I found your name through the UT College of Natural Sciences Alumni Group here on LinkedIn. From your LinkedIn profile, I see that you have worked in a variety of organizations that promote Public Health Education.

As I have focused my own studies in this area, including working at a number of community agencies here locally, I'd like to remain in this career industry after graduation. I'd love to hear about your own experiences within this field, as well as any advice you may have for me as I begin my job search.

I wonder if it might be possible to speak, at your convenience, over the phone? I understand you must be very busy, so I would promise to keep our phone conversation brief. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,
Betty Bevo

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BUILD

Widen Your Network

With every contact you make, you should attempt to gather new contacts. When you are wrapping up your meeting or conversation with a professional ask them if they know of anyone else in their network who would be willing to connect with you.

Follow the 80/20 Rule

In order to build strong and quality relationships with people, conversation management is a must. When engaged in conversation strive to try to make the other person feel important and honored by asking respectfully in-depth questions. The 80/20 rule means listen about eighty percent of the time and only talk about twenty percent of the time. Of course, this is not always an option, but it gives you a good balance to make constructive conversation.

Places/Tools to Build your Network

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is an opportunity to speak with someone about a specific career path, job type, or employer. It can be done over the phone, via email or in person. If you conduct an informational interview with someone, be sure to ask them if they have any other individuals who would be willing to connect with you.

Tip: Check out the Career Services Office website for a guide that includes information on how to conduct an Informational Interview.

Job Shadowing / Externships

These are opportunities to spend time with a professional at their place of work. By “shadowing” them for a couple hours, a day, or a couple of days, you get a first-hand view of what that person does on the job. It is important to get a realistic view of a professional in their working environment because it may assist you in career planning. Additionally, you can gather professional contacts to add to your network through these types of experiences

Tip: The Career Services Office offers an Externship program, called ‘Take a Longhorn to Work Day’. This service will be offered multiple times a year. Please refer to our website for more details.

Formal Networking Events

These can be job fairs, workshops, or social events where professionals will be present.

Social Media

Social media sites, when used in a professional manner, can be great tools for networking. LinkedIn is especially useful for networking purposes. Start by creating a profile, recording your experiences and looking for people you already know. Then, take a look at who your contacts are connected to. Ask your existing contacts to virtually introduce you to professionals you are interested in connecting with. After any networking interaction you have, be sure to connect with that person on LinkedIn. Additionally, join groups that are related to your career interest area.

Tip: Check out the Career Services Office website for a guide that helps you build your LinkedIn profile. If you are already on LinkedIn, be sure to join the ‘UT College of Natural Sciences Alumni’ group to connect with individuals in your college.

Professional Associations / Clubs

There are several student organizations and clubs within the College of Natural Sciences. Join groups that pertain to your area of interest. Attend meetings, get involved, and talk to others to expand your professional network.



TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ Don't wait! Building your professional network is a life-long process. It is ideal to start gaining contacts now so that you are prepared when you graduate.
- ✓ When networking, don't be overly aggressive, but be persistent!
- ✓ Don't give up! Even if some contacts are unable to meet or talk with you, move on to the next contact. Don't let one closed door keep you from connecting with others.
- ✓ Get to know your professors, colleagues, supervisors, advisors, etc. Not only can these individuals be a part of your network, but could potentially serve as a reference in the future.
- ✓ Always remember to conduct yourself in a professional manner when networking!

Tip: Check out the Career Services Office website for a Professional Etiquette guide that can help you enhance your professional image for networking interactions.

- ✓ Be sure to always follow-up with contacts!

Tip: Create a system for keeping track of your contacts. This will help you organize who you have met and when you contacted/followed-up with that individual. This is a great way to remind yourself of when you reached out to that person and if you need to follow-up with them in the future.

Sample Contact Management Sheet:

Group	Contact Name	Contact Info	Date	Relationship	Follow-up Action	Notes
Family						
Friends						
Co-workers						
Professional Associations						
Personal Groups						
Additional Contacts						

- ✓ Send thank you notes to networking contacts (i.e.- you met with a professional for an informational interview or a professional agreed to speak with you over the phone about their job). Thank you notes may be written or sent via email; either form is acceptable.

Sample thank you note:

Date: November 15, 20XX

Dear Ms. Andrews:



I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for meeting with me yesterday. It was a pleasure meeting you and I thoroughly enjoyed learning about your position at XYZ Company.

I truly appreciate your time as I know you are very busy. In speaking with you about your position, I feel very confident about my own career path.

I do hope that we can be in touch again in the future.

Thank you,
Betty Bevo

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