

BME Capstone Voice of the Customer Strategy Guidance

aka... “How to Network Like a Champion”

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How to find contacts:

- 1. Hospital Webpages:** Great source of contacts. Look at Emory’s, Piedmont’s etc. webpages. They usually have phone numbers and emails. Call them, email them. You want to establish straight off the bat that you are a Georgia Tech student (and not someone trying to sell them something) working on a Capstone project, and would love their input. Doctors know about Georgia Tech, and most love working with Georgia Tech students.
- 2. LinkedIn:** Great way to find contacts. Set up a call, ask them for 5 minutes of their time (See below). Search ‘Georgia Tech’ followed by ‘Company/role’. Or use the [“See Alumni” feature](#) on the GT LinkedIn page to sort by major, job role, etc.
- 3. Diversify your search:** Don’t just look for surgeons. Get in touch with nurses, CN’s, engineers (linkedin is a great resource for finding them). Talk to startups working in the area. See if there are any conferences in the area and try getting into them. If your project is sponsored by a hospital, search for departmental “grand rounds” or clinical seminars and try to attend.
- 4. Use a Customer relationship management (CRM) tool:** At minimum, track your outreach to a common document so you can follow how many contacts you’ve reached out to and who did not respond...aka who you want to follow up with a few days later. You can also [explore free apps](#) to help you run analytics on your email networking strategy.

General interview tips:

- 1. Best approaches to conduct an interview:**
 - a. In person:** This is the best way to get in touch with a contact.
 - b. Call:**
 - i.** Calling is the next best way to get in touch. Always ask for a small amount of time (5 minutes). After 4 minutes or so, tell them, “Our 5 minutes is almost up, is it okay to continue for a few more minutes? Can I come into your office to continue this conversation?”
 - ii.** Good times to call people varies widely, but often people are more open to discovery conversations toward the end of the workday (i.e. ~4-6pm), and mid-week (Wed-Thurs; supporting data can be found in [this marketing study](#)); especially true of any procedural-oriented physician (e.g. surgery). Be willing to offer your availability within AND outside of business hours. Consider offering to call when your stakeholder is commuting.
 - iii.** If you ever need a conference call line, whether for interviews or team meetings, you can schedule meetings via bluejeans at your convenience through <https://gatech.bluejeans.com/>
 - c. Email:** Lowest response rate. Do not try to get an interview via email, it rarely ever works. Use this as a last resort if other methods have failed. Usually only most useful to coordinate/schedule a phone call or in person interview. Be aware that many organizations have a common email format (e.g. [firstname.lastname@company.com](#)), which may be worth trying if you can’t find a stakeholder’s contact easily.
 - d. Surveys:** At this stage in customer discovery, not worth your time Best for assessing opinions for large marketing assessments. Worst for quality/level of evidence and usually worst response rates.

2. **Scheduling interviews:** It is incredibly helpful for your team to have a shared Google Calendar in which you can show when your team IS and IS NOT available when scheduling interviews among your busy lives.
3. **Do not begin with your highest value interview first.** You want to do 3-4 interviews with other leads before you feel comfortable enough to go after your high value targets.
4. **Do not rely on your advisor to find contacts.** You have a plethora of resources and Atlanta is a hub for surgeons and practitioners. Find as many as you can yourself. Your advisor is a secondary source.
5. **Be proactive when networking:** Watch out for phrases like, "I'll connect you with some of my patients later" or, "I'll introduce you later". This will likely never happen. If you do hear any of these phrases, follow it up with, "Can you call them now?" or, "Can I swing by their office now/what time will they be in their office so I can go talk to them?"

You got an interview, now what?

1. **DO YOUR RESEARCH:** This is the most important part of an interview. Do enough research beforehand and be knowledgeable of the subject matter being discussed. Surgeons especially do NOT like to explain basic concepts, and it shows.
2. **Prepare an actual interview guide** before your meeting. Write and prioritize questions based on the current needs of the project.
3. **Practical note taking:** Get in a habit of distributing the Q&A and note taking work. For the first in-person conversation, defer to pen and paper. For follow up in-person conversations, ask if it is okay if members of your team can take notes on your laptops (much faster). Do your discretion if it would distract from the meeting however.
4. **Ask open ended questions:** Ask questions that generate a discussion. Do not ask yes or no questions. They will lead nowhere. Try to get surgeons to talk as much as they can and you will often uncover problems they didn't even realize were problems.
5. **At the end of every interview:** Ask them to introduce you to some of their colleagues who can help you further. If they say, "I'll introduce you to them later"... you know what to say.
6. **Don't forget the follow up:** Followup within 24 hours to thank your stakeholder personally for meeting with you. Email is best for this, typically. Handwritten thank you notes, however, is an incredible gesture that can help you be remembered! Transcribe all notes to a common space (e.g. Google Drive meeting minutes document) and include any analysis ASAP. Your thoughts on what you learned will never be as fresh as they are within 1-2 hours after the meeting.

****Bonus:** Go to their office with donuts and coffee. You will be surprised with how many meetings you can get this way