



FOLLOW YOUR

PATH:

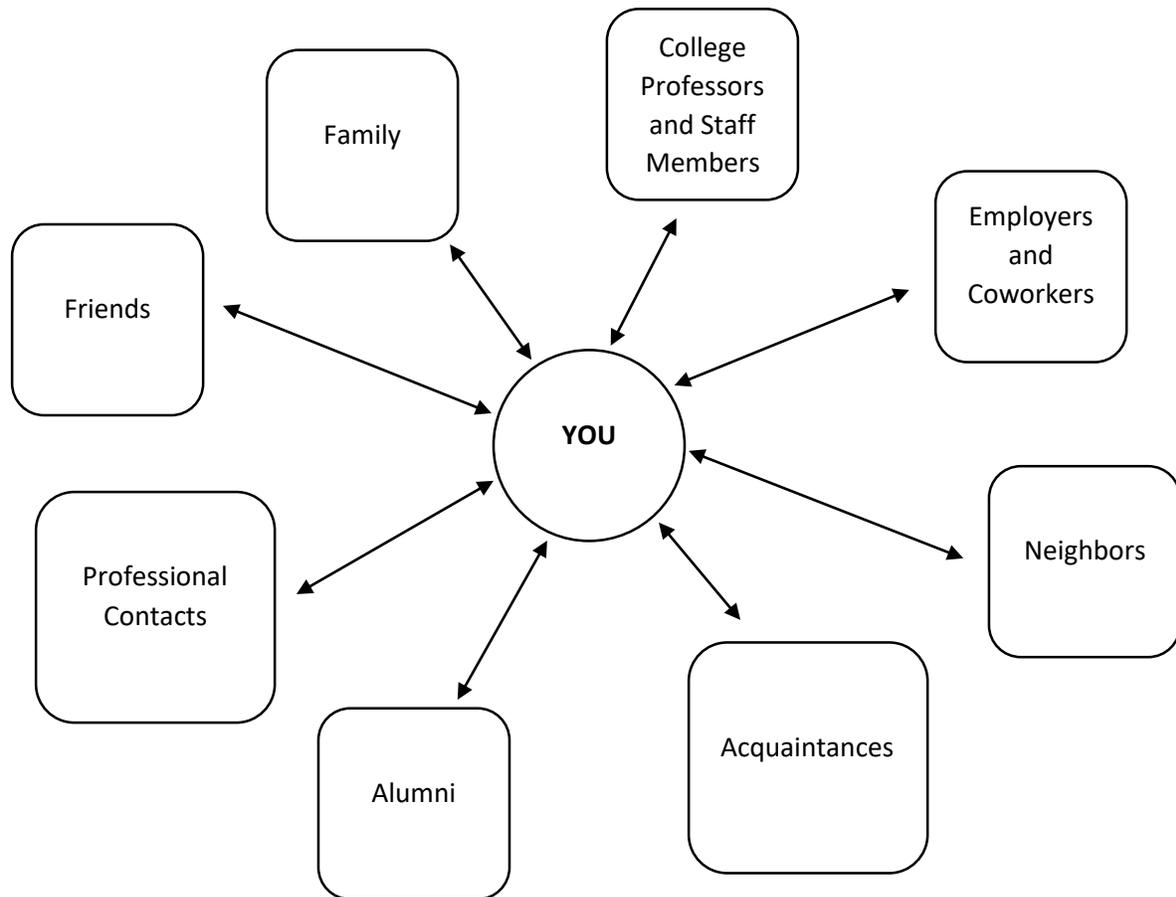
NETWORKING

GUIDE

Paul Smith's College
Center for Academic and Career
Success

Career Networking Map

“It’s all about who you know and who knows you!”



Top Networking Tips

- 1.) Contact people you already know.
- 2.) Build relationships.
- 3.) Do informational interviews.
- 4.) Attend Career Fairs.
- 5.) Attend networking events.
- 6.) Join professional associations and community organizations.
- 7.) Do your research.
- 8.) Prepare a trademark, branding statement, or elevator pitch.
- 9.) Send thank you notes.
- 10.) Maintain your network by keeping in touch.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

One of the best sources for gathering information about what's happening in an occupation or an industry is to talk to people working in the field. This process is called informational or research interviewing. An informational interview is an interview that you initiate - you ask the questions. The purpose is to obtain information about your chosen field, not to get a job.

REASONS TO CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS:

- to explore careers and clarify your career goal
- to discover employment opportunities that are not advertised
- to expand your professional network
- to build confidence for your job interviews
- to access the most up-to-date career information
- to identify your professional strengths and weaknesses

STEPS TO FOLLOW TO CONDUCT AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:

1. Identify the Occupation or Industry You Wish to Learn About

Assess your own interests, abilities, values, and skills, and evaluate employment trends and opportunities to identify the best fields to research.

2. Prepare for the Interview

Research all you can about the field prior to the interview. Decide what information you would like to obtain about the occupation/industry. Prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

3. Identify People to Interview

Start with lists of people you already know - friends, relatives, fellow students, present or former coworkers, supervisors, teachers, coaches, professors, neighbors, etc... Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call or email an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.

4. Arrange the Interview

Contact the person via email or telephone. Explain who you are and what the purpose of the interview is. Ask if you could arrange to speak with them at their convenience for 20 – 30 minutes to learn more about their field and position.

5. Conduct the Interview

Dress appropriately, arrive on time, be polite and professional. Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion. Before leaving, ask your contact to suggest names of others who might be helpful to you and ask permission to use your contact's name when contacting these new contacts.

6. Follow Up

Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within 48 hours of the interview. Add your new contact on LinkedIn to continue to stay in touch.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Prepare a list of your own questions for your informational interview. The following are sample questions:

1. What are your primary responsibilities?
2. On a typical day/week/month in this position, what do you do?
3. How much variety is there on a day-to-day basis?
4. What training or education is required for this type of work? Would you recommend graduate/professional school training right after college, sometime in the future, or not at all?
5. What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field? Are going to workshops, seminars, and conferences encouraged and supported?
6. What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
7. What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
8. How long have you been in your current position, and what was your career path to get here?
9. What opportunities for advancement are there in this field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
10. What entry-level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
11. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
12. What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
13. How would you advise I go about looking for an entry-level job?
14. What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
15. What particular skills or talents are most important to be effective in your job?
16. How do you keep up with changes and trends in your field?
17. What areas (specialties, types of organizations, geographic locations) do you feel promise the most growth/opportunities?
18. Would you be willing to give me feedback on my resume?
19. What are the important “key words” or “buzz words” to include in a resume or cover letter when job hunting in the field?
20. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?
21. Do you know anyone else who might be willing to talk to me? May I say that you referred me?
22. Do you have any other advice for me?

Navigating and Networking at a Career Fair



Before the Event:

Do your research: Before the fair it is crucial to identify and learn about 5 – 10 targeted companies you are interested in meeting. You will be able to ask deeper questions, get better insider information, and tailor your conversations and resumes specifically to each recruiter. Mention a program on their website that you are interested in learning more about or a particular geographic location where you’ve discovered they have offices.

Practice your trademark statement not your elevator pitch: Most of the employers at a career fair hear the same pitch from students – an enthusiastic greeting with their name, major, and career goals. Instead of being one of the crowd, try standing out with a trademark statement, or a brief statement that explains what your own personal “brand” is. Using your top strengths or skills can be a very good tool to help create your own trademark statement.

Pack light: If you can, try to avoid bringing a heavy backpack or bulky purse. You want to be able to easily navigate the crowded room, and keep your hands free for a handshake with recruiters. Instead, bring a folder with a pen and paper for notes, business cards if you have them, and copies of your updated resume.

Dress for success: Before the career fair, be sure to have a business casual or business professional outfit picked out. Generally speaking, this means dark, clean, polished clothing with minimal skin showing. Try to limit accessories and strong perfumes that may distract employers. Overall, you don’t want your clothes to be noticed more than your thoughts or accomplishments, so dress conservatively while still allowing a bit of your personality to show through.

During the Event

Have a plan: Do your research ahead of time so you know who will be at the fair. Make a plan for which employers you want to talk to and make the best use of your time to have meaningful conversations with those employers you are most interested in. Prioritize the employers you have the most interest in because you may not be able to reach everyone at the busy fair.

Smile: First impressions really do matter, so be sure to greet each person you meet with a smile, firm handshake, and positive introduction of you who are (perhaps using your trademark statement). These events can be long and taxing, so don’t be afraid to step out of the room for a few minutes to breathe and relax before moving on to your next conversation.

After the Event

Follow up: Within 24 – 48 hours of the career fair, send a thank-you note to each employer you interacted with. Personalize the note by mentioning something specific about your conversation and be sure to thank them for their time. Even if you are not currently interested in working for their organization, it always important to continue building your network.

Connect on LinkedIn: In addition to sending thank-you notes, connect with the employers you met via LinkedIn. Rather than sending the generic, “_____ would like to connect with you on LinkedIn,” send a personalized message reminding the recruiter of who you are, how you met, and what you discussed. Once you have connected, maintain your connection by showing interest in the field by joining groups, sharing articles, and posting status updates.



Finding and Utilizing a Mentor

A mentor is a voluntary counselor or teacher who guides you in work, school, or other areas of your life, and provides you with advice and guidance. Sometimes mentorship is a formal organized relationship between a professional and a younger professional, and sometimes it's more informal, like a friendship with a role model. Having a mentor can help you navigate big decisions related to your career path and future goals.

Choosing a Kind of Mentor

- 1.) Understand the role of a mentor. A good mentor will help you learn to do things, but not do them for you. A mentor leads by example. A good mentor will:
 - Assess your strengths and weaknesses
 - Help you understand the structure and organization of the topic
 - Teach you about professionalism and office protocol in your field
 - Boost your ability to make decisions
 - Familiarize you with the tricks of the trade and day-to-day responsibilities
 - Introduce new perspectives
- 2.) Consider different kinds of mentors. Many people choose an academic mentor, a business mentor, and a personal mentor who will be able to provide expertise on different areas of life.

Finding a Mentor

- 1.) *Decide what specific role you'd like your mentor to provide.* Write down any problems or specific requirements you might have regarding the field and subject matter. It would be helpful to answer the following questions:
 - What would you like to learn?
 - What are you looking for from your mentor?
 - How often would you like to meet?
 - Where?
- 2.) *Make a list of possibilities.* Create a list of potential mentors according to your personal criteria and desires for the relationship. Also, check if your company or school has a formal mentoring program that would line up a mentor for you. If so, see if it fulfills your goals and enroll in the program.
- 3.) *Prepare what you'll say to ask someone to be your mentor.* Be specific and explain what you're looking for. Be respectful of another person's time and energy.
- 4.) *Approach your potential mentor.* Approach some of the choices you outlined until someone agrees to fulfill the relationship as you've outlined it.
- 5.) *Make plans to meet.* Don't leave the relationship hanging once you've gotten someone to agree. Make concrete plans to get together at a set date and time. If the first meeting goes well, plan subsequent meetings. You might consider asking at that point, "Would you mind if we make this a regular thing?"

Maintaining the Relationship

- 1.) *Keep a schedule.* Show up to all planned meetings between you and your mentor. If the relationship reaches a natural conclusion, it's ok to end it. If you feel confident that you've improved a skill or gained the information you were seeking, say so.
- 2.) *Make the relationship mutually beneficial.* Think about what you might be able to offer your mentor in return so you both benefit from the time spent together.
- 3.) *Show your appreciation.* Write to your mentor to keep them updated on your progress and remember to thank them for their specific contributions. This will give the mentor a feeling of being useful, needed, and also skillful at their craft.

Social Media for Networking



- Update your status frequently
- Follow companies and join groups related to your field
- Comment on other updates, articles, and in groups
- Share articles related to your field of study or industry
- Invite new connections to your network to follow up
- Invite your network in on a conversation related to your field or industry



- Clean up your profile to delete any negative or inappropriate content
- Post updates to your timeline
- Share news and articles related to your field
- Like and comment on other posts
- Like and follow companies you are interested in
- Think about positive branding and consistent messaging across your social media platforms
- Invite your network in on a conversation related to your field or industry



- Follow people and companies you admire or are in your field of study/profession
- Retweet someone in your network
- Retweet posts related to your field of study or profession
- Tweet career updates out to your network
- Invite your network in on a conversation related to your field or industry

It's not
who you
know, it's
**WHO
KNOWS
YOU.**