

Networking Tips for Professional Functions

1. If you're shy, get a friend to go with you, so you'll have someone to talk to if you feel uncomfortable.
2. Wear a nametag - if you have bad handwriting, ask someone else to write your name for you. Put the name of your organization, or your (prospective) profession, under your name. Nametags are generally worn on the right-hand side.
3. Always have business cards with you – you can get free ones made at freebusinesscards.info or www.free-business-cards-templates.com.
4. Near the food is a good place to hang out and talk to people, but don't seem greedy.
5. Carry your food & drink in your left hand so you can be ready to shake hands when necessary. Don't talk with your mouth full!
6. Have a firm handshake, and make eye contact!
7. Set yourself a goal for the number of people you'll talk to before leaving.
8. If you're not sure how to begin a conversation, start by talking about the weather, the food, sports, etc. You can also ask someone if they know anyone there, and get them to introduce you to them.
9. Have your elevator speech ready to introduce yourself – remember, MOST people hate networking as much as you do!
10. Be honest, friendly, and sincere when talking to people. Start off by saying something nice about them or their organization – be positive!
11. Ask them questions and think about what you have to offer them before asking for a favor. People like to be helpful, but don't like to be put on the spot.
12. Always ask for business cards, but check whether it's ok to contact them, and whether phone or email is preferable.
13. Once you've finished, thank them, and move on – it's fine to pretend to see someone you know, or just say 'well, I should talk to that person over there.' Don't monopolize them, or allow yourself to be monopolized. It's a networking event, after all!
14. Know when to give up – if they seem bored or disinterested, then use one of the above strategies and move on.

Networking Assessment Questions

1. How many people know your looking for a job?
2. Of these people, do they know what job you are looking for?
3. Do you have business cards?
4. Can you talk confidently and succinctly about your skills, strengths, and interests?
5. How comfortable do you feel talking about the job you would like to have with people you don't know?
6. Have you interviewed someone to get information about a job or a company that you are interested in working for?
7. How many networking events have you attended?
8. Are you on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or any other online networking venues?

Establish Networking Goals

Effective networking requires goal setting. Successful networkers know where they want to go. They also know how to connect with the people who can help them get there.

Examples of broad networking goals:

- To change jobs soon
- To make a career change
- To increase my knowledge and expertise in my field of work
- To make my skills and expertise more visible to others
- To generate new business and professional contacts
- To make new friends

Examples of specific networking goals:

- To contact 5 old co workers from X Company by the end of this week
- To attend 2 networking events this week
- To research 5 companies for potential informational interview sources by tomorrow

My Goals are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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, not to get a job.

Following are some good **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

Listed below are **steps to follow to conduct informational interviews**:

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

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

2. **Prepare for the Interview**

Read 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 co-workers, supervisors, neighbors, etc... Professional organizations, the yellow pages, organizational directories, and public speakers are also good resources. You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title.

4. **Arrange the Interview**

Contact the person to set up an interview:

- a. by telephone,
- b. by a letter followed by a telephone call, or
- c. by having someone who knows the person assist you in making contact.

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

7. Immediately following the interview, record the information gathered. Be sure to send a thank-you note to your contact within one week of the interview.

NOTE: Always analyze the information you've gathered. Adjust your job search, résumé, and career objective if necessary.

20 QUESTIONS!

Prepare a list of your own questions for your informational interview. Following are some sample questions:

1. On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
2. What training or education is required for this type of work?
3. What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
4. What part of this job do you find most satisfying? most challenging?
5. How did you get your job?
6. What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
7. What entry level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
8. What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
9. How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
10. Is there a demand for people in this occupation?
11. What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
12. What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
13. What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
14. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
15. What do you think of the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
16. From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
17. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
18. 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?
19. What do you think of my résumé? Do you see any problem areas? How would you suggest I change it?
20. Who do you know that I should talk to next? When I call him/her, may I use your name?

Tips for Informational Interviews

- If appropriate, call directly to set up the appointment and arrange a mutually convenient time to meet. Having a referral is the best way to make your initial contact.
- Meet face to face, when possible. If not, a phone call or e-mail is better than no contact at all.
- Be clear in your own mind that your request is for information or advice, and not for a job. Also, be sure to communicate this early in your initial contact.
- If your contact has no time or rejects your request, do not take it personally. Instead, ask if they know someone else who could help you.
- Stay or talk only for the agreed time. 15-30 minutes is the right amount of time.
- Be sure to thank your contact. A thank you note following your meeting is a sure way to be well remembered.
- Don't forget to ask your contact for the names of others who might be helpful with your goals and plans.
- Remember, informational interviewing is not a job interview. Don't put any pressure on your contact to turn it into one.

Get Started

List five people with whom you can do an informational interview:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

7 Networking Strategies

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1. Keep your network in the loop	
2. Initiate Contacts	
3. Maintain or reconnect with old contacts	
4. Business Cards	
5. Pitch	
6. Online Networking	
7. Informational Interviewing	