

Networking Guide

INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER

The most successful job searches include a variety of methods to locate job openings: online job postings, career fairs, and sending introductory résumés and cover letters, but job seekers often forget about one of the most successful ways to locate potential job openings, networking through their personal contacts. Many jobs are never advertised to the public, which is why it is often called “the hidden job market.” When hiring, most organizations first look at people they already know and acquaintances recommended by people they know.

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking Is

- An exchange of information or services
- Getting the help you need
- Building and maintaining relationships *before* you need them
- Helping/mentoring others
- Genuine and authentic

Networking Is Not

- As difficult as it seems
- Asking for a job
- Bothering or pestering someone
- Expecting something as a result of a connection

Remember, the best networkers focus on what they can do for others, not what others can do for them!

GETTING STARTED

Create a Plan

What are your networking goals and what results are you seeking?

A Few Good People

You want quality contacts, not quantity. Spend your time making a few, quality contacts and keep in regular communication with them.

Inventory and Organize Your Current Networks

This makes it easier to find the right person for the right situation and helps you to not confuse your networks and contacts. Networks may be social, professional or online and may include primary (the people you know) and secondary (the people they know) networks.

Contact people who might be able to link you to someone else. Consider these current networks: friends, extended family, your parents’ friends and co-workers, your co-workers and bosses, church members, college faculty and staff. Networking can take place in a variety of settings including conferences and professional or student organizations, internships, career fairs, the gym, sporting events, and volunteer sites.

Evaluate Your Current Network

- What is their relationship to what you need and how can you give back?
- Who has the power to help you?
- What do you need from these people? Have you written it down?
- What is the best way to approach them? Who can make an introduction on your behalf?
- What is their value? What can they offer you?
- What is your value? What can you offer them?

DEVELOPING & MANAGING A PERSONAL BRAND

Why is personal branding so important?

- Communicates your professional identity
- Allows you to effectively align your skills & abilities
- Defines why you should be sought out
- Helps you value your distinction
- Holds you accountable

Think of yourself as a brand

- What attributes do people recognize you for?
- What are you passionate about?
- What have you accomplished?
- What value do you provide?
- What makes you unique?
- Who is your target?

Promote yourself

Develop your résumé focusing on accomplishments and skills.

- Be concise, organized and consistent
- Avoid templates and keep it simple
- Proof carefully
- Be honest

Prepare a cover letter that intrigues employers.

- Send whenever possible
- Elaborate on your résumé, don't reiterate it
- Avoid humor but be authentic

Practice your interview skills

- Dress appropriately
- Give concise answers
- Include examples
- Do your research and have questions prepared

Audit your online presence

- Google yourself every 3-4 months and note what comes up in the first three pages
- Who are you associated with?
- What is being posted about you?
- What impression do you leave?
- Not showing up in results is not necessarily a good thing

Evaluate your efforts

- What must I keep/stop/start doing?

PREPARATION FOR NETWORKING

Organization

Every time you meet or interact with someone, it is important to record who you spoke with, what they said, what you promised you would do, who they referred you to, etc. As your network grows, you will need to make a record of each networking conversation and have a plan for maintaining the relationships. Use an Excel spreadsheet or notebook.

Things to include:

- Name, position title, company/organization
- Address/phone/email

Things to include cont'd:

- LinkedIn/blog/personal website
- Referred to you by/how you found them
- What you have in common
- Date you met
- What you talked about and unique points of interest
- What follow up is needed and when you completed it

Nonverbal and Verbal Communication

Body Language

- 18-inches or more of personal space between you and others when talking
- A firm handshake
- Shoulders and hips parallel
- Smile and maintain eye contact
- Hands out of your pockets and avoid playing with your fingers/nails

Voice and Tone

- Have energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of purpose
- Smile when you speak

Verbal Language

- Select a vocabulary level that is appropriate for the audience and comfortable for you
- Avoid acronyms that others may not understand
- Refrain from slang, vulgarities or clichés
- Speak in complete sentences

Follow Up

At the conclusion of the conversation, ask the person what is the best way to follow up. Send a written thank you letter, use email when time is absolutely of the essence. You should also connect with the person on LinkedIn.

Informational Interview*

Informational interviews are fact-finding meetings that will help you gain insight into an industry/occupation/specific employer, learn what types of skills are needed in the job, and establish contacts that may help you find employment in the future.

*An example of an informational interview request is included on page 6 of this guide.

Common Informational Interview Questions

- How did you decide on this career? What was your career path? What was your major in college?
- What is a typical entry-level job in this field?
- What skills are needed most for this type of job?
- What are the rewards/challenges/frustrations of your work?
- What do you wish you would have known prior to entering the field?
- What is it like to work in this organization?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?
- What are the new developments in the field?
- Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information?
- Which professional associations do you recommend that I participate in?

Encourage Face-to-Face Meetings

It's preferable to meet your network contacts face-to-face when possible. We forfeit 93% of our communication power when using email. Phone calls followed by a face-to-face meeting will go a much longer way in making a connection that lasts.

Encourage Face-to-Face Meetings Cont'd

When you meet, use your meeting time effectively. Be sure to have an agenda prepared to keep you on track. Make sure to listen and take notes. This will make follow up and a thank you letter/email easier to write. Be open about everything you are doing. Odds are, that person has been in your shoes and is interested in why you are attracted to their profession.

Written Correspondence/Email

Do not send a potential contact a laundry list of questions. Introduce yourself first and ask if there is a good time when you can speak with them about your questions. Examples of questions are earlier in this guide. Always see if they can speak on the phone or meet face-to-face, as these are the preferred methods of conducting an informational interview.

Telephone

Be sure to have an introduction script ready to go when you make the initial phone call. Show them you are mindful of their time by asking if it would be possible to schedule a time to speak at greater length. Assure them that you will only take 20-30 minutes of their time. It should be their choice as to whether the conversation lasts longer.

Networking at an Event

Joining a conversation:

- Approach groups of three or more
- Position yourself close to the group
- Begin by making non-verbal feedback to comments (nodding, smiling in agreement)
- Once you feel included, join in the conversation and introduce yourself
- Use OAR: Observe, Ask, Reveal
- Be open to others trying to join in
- Exit graciously

Appropriate conversation topics:

- Think of where you are, who you know, and why you are at this particular event
- Be aware of what is going on in the news, both locally and nationally
- Do NOT discuss religion, politics, controversial topics in the news, or use profanity

Steps for creating your elevator pitch are included on page 7 of this guide.

Final Networking Tips

- Make a point to give to others first
- Risk rejection
- Conduct a *people* search instead of a job search
- Maintain your profiles and networks
- Branding efforts must work together
- Include your LinkedIn profile information on résumé
- Be consistent and authentic

SOCIAL MEDIA

Employer Dislikes

- Inappropriate photos or information
- Content of drinking/drugs
- Bad-mouthing of previous employers, co-workers, or clients
- Poor communication skills
- Misrepresentation of qualifications

Employer Likes

- Profile supports professional qualifications
- Intelligent and creative content
- Solid communication skills
- Other people posting good references
- Showcasing awards and accolades

Social Media Platforms

LinkedIn

- Over 500 million professionals use LinkedIn to exchange information, ideas, and opportunities. Roughly 95% of job recruiters use LinkedIn to find qualified candidates (U.S. News & World Report 2017).
- When creating your profile:
 - Make sure your profile is filled out completely
 - Update your experiences and education
 - Use relevant keywords (avoid overused words like responsible, creative, motivated)
 - Include a professional photo
 - Professional headline – strong and exciting
- Tips
 - Contacts: connect with colleagues, classmates, university alumni, companies, and industries to expand your network and use a personalized message to introduce yourself
 - Use a personalized message to introduce yourself rather than the default introduction
 - Groups: join groups and professional organizations
 - Jobs: search for available positions
 - Companies: search for companies and follow their news and updates
 - News: follow top news stories in your fields of interest

Facebook

- Let people know what you are looking for in a job and location
- "Like" industry, company, and group pages appropriate to your search
- Keep your profile and comments professional!

Twitter

- Make your page employer-friendly and Tweet about your job search
- Network with people based on common interests
- Engage in conversations with influencers in your industry
- Leave high-value comments on relevant blogs that invite responses
- Subscribe to job feeds via Twitter

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUEST EXAMPLE

Matt Thompson
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Brazil IN, 47834
(812) 767-0985
mthompson@sycamores.indstate.edu

October 3, 2018

Ms. Kerri McWalters
Accountant
BGS Accounting Firm
3232 Market Street
Indianapolis, IN 46201

Dear Ms. McWalters:

Dr. Smith, my professor of accounting at Indiana State University, suggested that I contact you. He thought you would be in an excellent position, as an ISU graduate, to assist me with a career decision.

As an accounting student, I am exploring which career path to pursue. Public accounting, managerial accounting, and IRS work all sound interesting to me at this point, but I want to go into my job search this spring with a clear sense of direction. I would like to get your advice on the long term implications of each path, as well as to get a better handle on the day-to-day activities of a CPA.

If your schedule allows, I would appreciate a 20-30 minute phone conversation or face-to-face meeting. I can be very flexible in arranging a time that works best for your schedule. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Matt Thompson
Accounting Major, Indiana State University



Elevator Pitch: 4 Steps to Success



Name, Major, & Goal

This is your first part of your first impression! Non-Verbal is as important. Smile, strong handshake, eye contact. Your name, your major, what year you are in school. What is your professional goal?



What do you have to offer?

This is your opportunity to highlight RELEVANT skills, achievements, experiences, etc. This is where you tell them what you have to offer that particular company. It is important that it is relevant and you can use anything from work, internships, organizations, and classroom experiences.



Express your interest

Demonstrate your knowledge and interest in the company. You must do research on the company. Brag about them! What is something you find about them that you find intriguing? Sell them on them!



End with a Question

Ask them something leading back to them. This can be anything from a personal question about why do they enjoy working there to a professional leading question about technical issues, something they are in the news for, or ask their opinion on how to prepare yourself for the next step of your career with their company/industry.

