

For Your Networking Strategy

The primary purpose of networking is to gather information that can lead to further contacts and information regarding job/internship opportunities. Never approach this activity as 'getting a job' but rather as career research. Research leads to information, which leads to opportunities. Before you begin to network, please refer to the following suggestions:

Overall Strategies:

- If possible, have a clear idea of what industry or career areas are of interest. If you are still unsure which industries interest you most, speak with a career coach from the CCPD
- Identify the information you want to learn the most about
- Join professional organizations and listservs to meet people in the industry you hope to enter
- Develop your list of contacts (e.g., people whom you would like to know about your job/internship search and gain information from)
- Devise a list of questions. Be clear about what information you need from each individual
- Ensure you have a resume ready for meetings, to email upon request, etc.
- Offer flexibility in your schedule. Always fit your agenda around the contact's schedule
- Ask your contact if they can recommend other individuals with whom to speak
- Use resources such as LinkedIn to connect with people and alumni in the industry you are interested in working
- Follow companies on LinkedIn and participate in conversations with groups that you have joined

After the interaction:

- Email a thank you note, in a timely fashion, after every successful exchange
- Maintain the relationship by contacting the person every month or so to report progress
- Keep a record of your calls, conversations and meetings
- Do not take it personally if people cannot or do not help you

Sample Questions for Networking Situations:

Open-ended questions encourage description and dialogue:

- What do you think is the best educational preparation for a career in _____?
- What are the qualifications you look for in a new hire?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- Tell me about your current position. Could you describe a typical workday?
- What aspect of your job do you find most challenging?

- What do you think of the experience I have so far, in terms of getting into _____?
- What are your thoughts on my resume? Would you suggest any changes?
- Do you have a recommendation for whom I should talk to next in the field? May I use your name?
- What else should I know to make an informed decision about choosing a career in this field?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path? Is there anything you would change?

How to Avoid Obstacles & Common Pitfalls

The following are recommendations for dealing with unexpected obstacles and situations that you may encounter while networking:

You feel uncomfortable: Networking is a respected means of career exploration and job searching. It is likely that your contacts will have networked themselves, will applaud your initiative and be excited to share information. Remember that networking helps both parties! If you do your research, you may also be able to share information that benefits your contact.

Silences: Create and refer to your prepared list of open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a yes/no response.

Rude responses: If you receive a rude response or an inappropriate comment, thank the contact and, if necessary, leave or end the conversation early.

Lengthy answers: If the information is not helpful, refocus the interview by stating that you don't want to take too much of his/her time, and ask another question from your list.

You ask for a job and the conversation seems to end: Networking is best used to develop relationships, not simply to locate job leads. Use networking meetings to gain information, develop further contacts, and seek advice to improve your job search.

You become the interviewee: If an actual job is presented to you, you may choose to be interviewed formally on the spot. In this case, it is appropriate to ask more questions about the job, such as what skills or experiences are relevant, before answering interview questions.