

The *who* and *how* of networking outreach

A fun game to play during the job search is to gain a point every time a panelist or administrator suggests you try networking. You objectively know that networking is something you *should* be doing. But actually taking the steps to reach out to someone you barely know or don't know at all? That is the real challenge. First, Second Day is here to tell you that your hesitancy (if it's there) to network is *totally* natural. Second, though, we're here to tell you that networking really is helpful. Upwards of 90% of our Second Day fellows got their first full-time role in social impact through some sort of connection. The exact path was different for each, with friends or mentors passing on a role, recommending them to the hiring manager, coaching them through the hiring process, or hiring them directly. But *very few* people were successful just surfing job boards and applying to dozens of positions.

This guide shares templates and resources for how to activate and grow the network of supporters who can help you land a full-time role in public service. And hopefully, how to do it in a way that doesn't feel exhausting or gross!

The keys to authentic networking

There are two types of network-building conversations:

- **Authentic relationship building.** These are conversations that might not even count as networking in your mind. Maybe it is talking to an older friend to genuinely learn about their internship at an organization. Or asking a professor for advice during office hours. You weren't necessarily going into that conversation looking to get anything out of it but actually ended up with helpful information and a helpful entry into an organization or field
- **Transactional relationship building.** These are conversations where you know going into it that you are trying to get something out of the conversation. Maybe you are at a job fair or are really trying to contact someone at an organization you are interested in. Sometimes it feels good, but sometimes it feels *terrible and insincere*

As you build connections in industries that you care about, it is unlikely that you will get as far as you want through serendipity and friends alone. You likely will need to be thoughtful about people in your network (or beyond) who can help you advance your knowledge of the world and connect you with opportunities. But if you ground yourself in a few principles, it can help to shift as many networking conversations from transactional to authentic.

1. **Be authentically curious.** Every single person you talk to has their own journey and has encountered things that you don't know. Even if you are talking to someone and you need something specific from them (i.e. a connection to a role), it is likely that they also have some wisdom you can glean. As soon as you internally frame the conversation as transactional, the odds of you dreading it increase dramatically
2. **Do your homework.** The more you research someone's background or work ahead of time, the more likely you are to have interesting questions for them. See our informational interview question bank for more ideas here
3. **Remember that you are talking to a regular person just like you.** It's great to have some small talk and be friendly. The more you can make it like a conversation rather than a user interview, the better it will feel for both people

Who is your networking target?

The most helpful people in your job search will likely be people you know. It doesn't mean you have to know them well, but any loose connection will often be much more willing to help you than a total stranger. Even a second-degree connection is very helpful. If my friend Joe asks me to help his friend that I've never met before, I want to go the extra mile to help this stranger because I care about Joe.

And so, it is helpful to take the time to deeply inventory the network of folks you know. LinkedIn is a great way to build and maintain a list of people in your life over the years. But it's never comprehensive. Instead, you can map out and brainstorm people who might be able to help you (1) learn more about a certain industry or organization, (2) connect you with others in that interest area, or (3) support your discernment process. Activating those people and going from there is a great place to start!

But you are also very likely to need to reach out cold to someone at some point. And so, here are some additional ideas for who could support you outside of your current network:

Who you're looking for	Why?
Alumni of your university	Alumni love to help other alumni! It also makes your first outreach email super simple: <i>"I'm a student at X place, and I would love to hear how your experience at X place helped you build this career"</i> Identify people's alma mater on LinkedIn or on the networking platform they use.

Mix of entry-to-mid-level professionals	Someone a few years into their career will be sympathetic to your job search plight and is more likely to be working in a job you're looking to apply for. They can tell you the secrets of how the hiring process works and about the role to see if you are interested in it.
Working at an organization that aligns with your place and topic interests	Even if your favorite organization isn't hiring right now, networking with people working there now will give you an ear to when they're hiring, and a person to recommend you internally when the time comes. Also, they can connect you with people at other similar organizations in the area you might not have heard of on your own. You'll have a warm intro <i>and</i> a better understanding of the organization landscape.
Someone working in a role that interests you	In addition to organization alignment, the ideal person to network with is someone who has worked or is working in a position you're interested in applying for. For example, if you're interested in communications jobs, reach out to the current communications associate.

So, you have a better idea of a good person to talk to. Now it's time to find them and reach out! **The best way to start is with an organization and find people from there.** Before we get started, however, here are a couple of things to remember.

1. Track your networking chats! You don't need anything complicated, make a copy of one of these spreadsheet templates ([1](#), [2](#), or [3](#)). You can keep track of follow-up steps out of conversations and once you get the job, you have a comprehensive list of the people you talked to to update them on your next steps and keep the connection alive!
2. The stakes when it comes to cold-outreach are much lower than you might imagine. If someone doesn't respond, they aren't going to think negatively of you as long as you sent a thoughtful note!
3. Professionals in the social impact field are often very happy to talk to young professionals who care about the same issues as them. Don't be worried you're burdening them by talking to them. If they say yes, they want to talk to you and want to help in any way they can!

Finding people to talk to and outreach on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a great way to find people to connect with and do outreach--all on the same platform. Start with an organization you care about, and then investigate from there!

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1. Search the organization and go to their people page



2. Once you find someone, check out their profile



Say you're someone interested in working on a campaign and you went to Georgetown! Based on what you've learned, you want to reach out to Rachel and ask for an informational interview.

Use the LinkedIn Message templates at the end of this document to send a message asking the person if they have time to connect for an informational interview. These messages will be shorter than the typical email, and remove the hassle of finding someone's contact information since it's through LinkedIn. Plus, after you speak, you'll have a new connection on LinkedIn.

Finding people to talk to and outreach using websites

An **organization's staff page** is another great way to find new people for your network. Depending on the level of detail, you can find the executive leadership, an organization's full staff, and bios about their work history. Once you find the right person to contact, Second Day recommends reaching out via email to ask for an informational interview. However, in the course of your earlier networking, **you may have noticed that staff members sometimes don't post their emails on the organization's website**. If this is the case--you can make use of the sleuthing skills you got so good at using social media to find your ex-partner's new partner's best friend. Though this might feel awkward, email is the primary tool that most professionals use to communicate. **The worst that can happen is that someone doesn't respond**. Social impact staff are quite busy, you're coming in as a young person excited about the field, and they get tons of emails every day. They're not going to care how you got their email. This being said, how exactly do you find someone's email if it isn't posted?

First, you can try the old fashioned method: if there's at least one person with a publicly posted email, follow the format of that email (for example, first_name@secondday.org or first initial last name @obama.org). Using that formula, you can then input the name of the person you want to reach out to. For example, Mariam Matin would probably be Mariam@secondday.org. You can make this process easier by installing a browser extension like [Hunter](#) that does the work for you. Below, we'll show you how to find an email using Hunter.

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1. You want to network with someone at Second Day so you go to "About Us, and find the staff page

2. Phil's bio looks interesting and you want to reach out, but there's no email information on the page. Now it's time to turn to Hunter!

3. At the top of your browser (this is on Google Chrome), click on the Hunter browser extension

4. Right away, Hunter has found Phil's email embedded on the website, and confirmed it. You can reach out now!

5. Hunter has also found the typical pattern for someone at Second Day's email, so you can find others as well using the find someone feature

Now that you know how to find people's emails, the next step is to actually do the outreach. We'll talk through some tips for how to make email outreach as easy as possible in the section below.

Templates are a networker's best friend!

The easiest way to waste time during networking is to stress over writing a new, detailed, email each time you reach out to a new person. To be sure, **you want to personalize the email, but you definitely don't want to start from scratch.** For example, in a networking email, you usually tell them a little bit about yourself. That paragraph will stay relevant, no matter who you talk to, and you can just tweak a few details. Start by drafting your template emails (you can have a few depending on your job interests, leaving room for personalization. (ex. comms template email, environmental template email, follow up template email ect.). You can keep these drafts in a google doc for reference, or in your email drafts folder for easy access. If you have gmail and want to be fancy, Second Day recommends taking advantage of the gmail templates tool! We'll show you how to use this tool below.

Using Templates in Gmail

1. Go to your Gmail settings and select Advanced

2. Enable templates (the default is turned off)

Settings

General Labels Inbox Accounts and Import Filters and Blocked Addresses Forwarding and POP/IMAP Add-ons Chat and Meet **Advanced** Offline Themes

Auto-advance

Show the next conversation instead of your inbox after you delete, archive or mute a conversation. You can select whether to advance to the next or previous conversation in the "General" Settings page.

☒ Enable
☐ Disable

Templates

Turn frequent messages into templates to save time. Templates can be created and inserted through the "More options" menu in the compose toolbar. You can also create automatic replies using templates and filters together.

☒ Enable
☐ Disable

3. Open up a new email and write up your draft template

6. Now your template menu is ready to use for each new networking email at the tips of your fingers!

5. Save your drafts as templates using this button

4. Select these three dots to find the templates menu

Bumping people and following up: As mentioned above, it's helpful to have additional templates beyond your first intro like bumping someone if they don't respond or following up after your chat. As a general rule, it's appropriate to bump someone if they haven't responded to your initial email once if it's a cold email. If it was a warm intro and they haven't responded, check in with the introducer. Another good rule to follow is to ALWAYS follow up an informational interview with a thank you and any next steps you discussed. "Thanks so much again for offering to introduce me to" Write a sample follow up template to make this process easier.

Networking Draft Messages

Cold Emails

Any cold email should have five elements:

1. **A quick intro** of you and your interests
2. **What you are hoping to learn** or gain from the conversation
3. **Why you are reaching out to them specifically** and/or why they are uniquely able to answer your questions
4. **A call to action** if they are willing to help (a call or coffee chat)
5. **An out for them:** the chance to chat in a few months or answer questions via email if they are too busy

These elements don't need to be included sequentially, but a good cold email will usually have all five without being too long. The person you are emailing is quite busy and so essentially you are pitching them that a conversation with you will be so helpful that it is worth them taking the time.

Below is a simple example:

Hello [Name],

I hope you're doing well! My name is [Your name], and I'm a [job title] with [Company/school]. I really admire your [work/experience] with [outlet]. {add one more sentence about what you admire} I'm interested in finding out more about [area] myself and was hoping you'd be willing to provide some insights from your experience.

Do you have time for a 30 minute call sometime over the coming weeks so that I could learn {something more specific than just about their journey}? If so, are there a couple of good times for you? I'm happy to be flexible since I know you are quite busy {or you can replace this with your actual availability - e.g. afternoons usually work well for me.}

I understand your schedule may be busy, so I'm also happy to pass along some questions via email if that's easier for you.

Looking forward to hearing from you, [Name]!

Best wishes,
[Your name]

Warm emails (you have already been introduced through a contact)

Warm emails should typically have four elements:

1. **Context on your situation** - depending on the person this could be a long refresher about your interests, a reminder that they offered this to you a year ago, or a quick update that you are hoping to have some conversations this month
2. **A clear ask** - this could be asking if they can connect you with someone specific or more broadly if they know anyone in a specific organization/industry
3. **Supporting materials** - provide resources that make it as fast and easy as possible for them to help. If you are asking for a connection, try providing a blurb that they can paste in or forward on to their friend. If you are asking them to think about contacts, provide as much detail about what type of person could be helpful as possible
4. **An out for them:** other ways that they could help you without

Hello [Name],

As you might remember from office hours last spring, I'm really interested in pursuing {x} after graduation. I think you mentioned that you might know some people {context on what they said}. I'm trying to have some conversations with professionals in that space over the next few weeks as I think about my post-grad plans.

Are there any folks that you think might be helpful to talk to? I've included a draft email that you could forward along below. I'm happy to provide more detail or context if helpful. AND it's totally ok if no one comes to mind.

Best wishes,
[Your name]

Include forwardable blurb here including a few sentences about you and what you are hoping to learn from a conversation.

If they said you could use their name to reach out to someone, here is an example to use:

My name is [Your name], and I [how you know mutual contact] [mutual contact's name], who passed along your contact information to me.

[Mutual contact's name] mentioned that we share a [passion for/interest in/experience with] [shared interest] and said you'd be a great person to get to know! So, I thought I'd reach out, introduce myself, and let you know that I'd love to find out more about you and your experience with [specific area].

Do you have 30 minutes sometime over the next few weeks for a conversation? Are there a few times that might work for you? If you are too busy, I can follow up later!

Looking forward to connecting, [Name]!

All the best,

[Your Name]

Nudge email

Hi x,

I just wanted to follow up to see if you have time to chat sometime over the coming weeks? I'm happy to share more information if helpful. If you are too busy, no worries!

Thanks,

[Your Name]

LinkedIn message:

Hi X, I hope you are well! My name is X and I currently work for a consulting firm that designs innovative financing mechanisms in sectors that include community health. I am very interested in the work that Y does and I wanted to see if you had a free moment to connect.

Hi X!

I hope all is well on your end. I wanted to reach out to you to get some insight on your role at X. I am in my final semester in the Latin American Studies program with much of my focus being in Colombia. I've followed X for a while and have seen the variety of roles particularly in X. The Career Center mentioned that you would be great to speak with to get real insight into the work that X does and the culture at X. Would you be willing to have a 30-minute Zoom call or Skype call to chat a bit more? Please let me know, and I'm looking forward to speaking with you

AI writing supports

AI can be a great tool for drafting networking outreach. It'll help break through writers block. Most of the messages it creates are pretty sterile and generic though, so we would highly recommend tweaking and re-writing drafts before hitting send!