Networking Guidelines

What is networking?
Networking is a process for gathering career information from reliable, “inside” sources. It is a tool to use to ask for career advice – not a job. To be successful at networking you must learn to form mutually beneficial relationships with others. Networking involves both give and take.

Why is networking important?
The number one way to secure employment in today’s competitive market is through networking. Estimates say that anywhere from 75 to 80 percent of available positions are never advertised but are filled through word-of-mouth or networking.

Who belongs in my network?
Everyone! Networking means developing a broad list of contacts. Initially, you will utilize your existing contacts to spread the word that you are looking for a job. For college students and new grads, the best networking contacts are:

- Classmates and former classmates
- Alumni, including recent grads
- Parents and parents of classmates
- Other relatives
- Professors, instructors and advisors
- Fraternity brothers, sorority sisters and registered student organization members and alumni
- Coaches or other administrators
- Current and former co-workers

Basically, anyone you have ever met!

Get involved in activities that allow you to continue to build your network. Hold volunteer positions. Do an externship or internship and use that opportunity to schedule an informational interview. Join your alumni association, an online network or a professional organization. Contact a company’s human resource department directly and ask for the name of someone who works in a department of interest to you. Chambers of Commerce, community service centers and membership rosters of professional associations are also good sources for career-related information.

How do I get started?
Brainstorm contacts. There are three different types of contacts and while you may begin with those contacts closest to you, eventually you will include all three types of contacts in your network.

- Hot contact: A person you know well and with whom you have a direct connection.
- Warm contact: A person with whom you have a connection, but you may not know them personally.
- Cold contact: A person with whom you have no connection.

Prepare questions to ask. Some examples include:

- How did you get to where you are today?
- What changes are happening, or can you predict happening, within your industry?
- What do you regard as your greatest achievement in business to date?
- What do you love about your work?

Always have business cards with you. Keep your resume updated as well, so you can provide it upon request.

Think of every place you go as an opportunity to meet people. That way, you can expand your network seamlessly.

Follow through quickly and efficiently on referrals you are given. When people give you referrals, your actions are a reflection of them. Respect and honor that and your referrals will grow.
Tips and tools for networking

Professional introduction. Business networking is often about first impressions; dress well, polish how you speak, make eye contact and generally present yourself to impress others. Have a plan of attack. When you arrive at a networking event, avoid gravitating to people you know. Keep one hand free to allow yourself to shake hands with people you meet. Prepare and practice your personal introduction. Initiate conversation with someone who is standing by themselves.

Professional presentation. Use the other person's first name two or three times so you remember it. Practice your networking skills by introducing each person you meet to someone else.

Spend your time asking your contact questions; then, listen to their answers. Be sure to look directly at your contact. When you receive a business card from someone, take a moment to write yourself a note on it such as where you met or something you learned about them.

Location. The best location for networking is by a high-traffic area such as a main door. Never approach someone if they are walking toward the restroom or if they have a phone in their hand. Wait for a pause in the conversation to introduce yourself and join the group.

Follow-up. Follow-up with every person you meet. A short note letting someone know you enjoyed meeting them will solidify your initial impression as a savvy professional and help them to remember you. When you meet someone for the first time, you have 48 hours to follow-up with them before they will completely forget you. Your goal is to develop relationships with your contacts, so follow-up is key.

Networking cards. Use a networking business card. Take plenty of them with you everywhere you go. Vistaprint.com is a great resource for business cards.

Or, upgrade to a resume highlights card, which uses the back of the card to highlight the specific skills and qualifications you possess for the types of jobs and industries you are targeting. Make sure you have plenty of cards on hand.

Summary of Qualifications

- Willing to relocate
- Aggressive, dynamic individual
- Excellent relationship builder
- Analytical and quantitative skills
- Strong leadership skills and experience

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Looking to secure a position in marketing where I can apply my creative skills, marketing education, and experience and be part of a team that helps achieve the organization's success.