

# How to get your Foot in the Door

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# WORLD OF EMPLOYMENT: Why are so few jobs advertised?

Before we describe the methods for finding the non-advertised jobs, we want to explain WHY so many of the available jobs are not advertised anywhere. It is easiest to understand this from the employers' point of view.



*Imagine yourself as a supervisor. Seven employees work with you in your department. One of these employees, Katelyn, comes up to you today, and tells you that she has been offered a position with another organization. The position fits well with her long-range career goals, and it is a position that you could not have offered to her. Because she is a responsible and dedicated employee, she is staying at her current position for four more weeks before moving to her new job. Because you are a supportive supervisor, you are genuinely happy for her, and you wish her success in her career.*

Okay, now what do you do? You need to replace Katelyn soon. In general, when a position becomes available in an organization, what is the first action that the employer takes to fill the position?

What will be *your* first action?

Are you first going to call the newspapers to place advertisements? Probably not.

Advertisements are expensive, and they bring in hundreds of resumes from people who aren't really qualified for the job. This creates a lot of busy work for you and your department. You want to use your time more productively.

Your first action as a supervisor will probably be to think of qualified individuals whom you know *personally*, and possibly to call professional friends who may know qualified people. Your second action will be to ask your other six employees in the department whether *they* know someone who is qualified for the job. Third, you will post the position internally. If no candidates are found through all of these means, you will advertise the position in newspapers, on college campuses, and through other listings.

Employers move through these steps for two reasons: (1) it doesn't cost any money, and (2) by relying on people they trust (themselves, their employees, other professional friends), they have a much better chance of quickly finding qualified people. By considering smaller numbers of potential employees, they also save staff time that would be devoted to screening, interviewing, and processing candidates.

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**What does this mean for you?** It means that your chances of finding a job are often related to the *number* of people (and the *kinds* of people) whom you can contact and inform of your job search and your qualifications! Your chances are also related to your persistence in maintaining your relationships with these people!  
This is called NETWORKING.

# INTRODUCTION TO NETWORKING

The term "networking" refers to meeting and talking with people, and letting them help you find other people who can provide information and advice about your field. These people can also keep you up-to-date on available and upcoming jobs that may not be listed anywhere. It refers to the **relationships** that you **develop** with these "professional contacts" through low stakes conversation that focuses on gathering and sharing information; this is called informational interviewing. Networking is NOT asking everyone you know for a job.

## WHO SHOULD YOU TRY TO MEET?

The ultimate goal in networking is to contact people who are employed in the types of jobs that you want and to ask them for information and advice. *These* are the people who know the most about job openings for you.



Many books suggest that you try to meet with people *who have the power to hire you*. The rationale is that you can convince the decision-maker to offer you a position. We disagree. Unless you know enough about a business to really understand what will save money and increase productivity, it's better to talk to people who are currently *in the type of positions that you are seeking*. These people typically have more time to talk with you, have more accurate information about their field, and know of more "potential" openings than their supervisor. Remember that employees don't tell their supervisor that they're looking for a job - they tell their co-workers. *That's* who you need to talk to!

Sometimes, students who have little experience in the work world are apprehensive about calling and talking with someone in a professional position. The beauty of networking is that you aren't "cold calling;" you are usually calling someone whom you know, or someone who has been recommended to you. In addition, as long as you are genuine and you don't ask for a job, people in general are very receptive to talking with you.

## FOCUS ON INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Many people are hesitant to look for a job in this way because it doesn't produce immediate results. You will not instantly get an interview or a rejection letter. Why? Because in networking, you don't ask people for a job; you ask for *information* and *advice* regarding the field that you want to enter. This *leads* to information *about* jobs.

### NOTE:

This is why it is easier to find a job when you narrow your resume OBJECTIVE (See "HOW TO WRITE A RESUME" booklet). When you're asking people for information and advice, you have to be specific. If you're *vague* about what you want, how can you expect them to be specific in their referrals? If you remain *vague* in your objective, or if you have *no* objective, you will find it difficult to network, and so you will limit yourself to the advertised jobs.

It is worth repeating: Although you are looking for a job, you aren't *asking* for a job. You're asking for *information* and *advice*.

# IDENTIFY PEOPLE TO MEET

## (8-10 MONTHS BEFORE GRADUATION)

Contact individuals with whom you have developed relationships. You probably already have numerous professional relationships, and don't even realize it. For example, consider internship supervisors, field placement supervisors, and previous employment supervisors, as well as faculty in your major. It is important to stay in contact with these people.



Drop an e-mail to your field placement supervisor or keep your internship supervisor informed of your academic progress. Contact these people and let them know your plans, and that you will be graduating soon.

### Who should be part of my Network?

- Classmates
- Alumni, recent grads
- Family and other relatives
- Classmates' family and friends
- Professors, especially your advisor
- Administrators
- Athletic coaches
- Guest speakers in classes
- Current and former employers
- Members of organizations
- Friends
- Neighbors

### When you know people, but they're NOT in your field:

You shouldn't expect to know every person who works in your chosen career field at every organization that you are pursuing.

You *should* approach the people you *do* know. They will lead you to the other people you need to meet. Here is a simplified sample telephone conversation to illustrate how you might approach a professional contact:

"Hi, Helen! This is Doug. Say, how did that cross-breeding experiment with the cockroaches work out?...Great! I'm glad you came up with a use for that leftover construction adhesive...."

"Helen, you know that I'll graduate from Capital University in May, and I've decided to explore the field of biology in the health care industry in Columbus. I need to find out more about the field, relevant organizations, and the Columbus area before I leap into the job search."

"I need to meet with people in the field to ask them a few questions; get some information and advice. Do you know anyone in Columbus who [works at a hospital or other health care facility...works in biology...knows a lot of people]? Would you feel comfortable with my telling them that you referred me? I plan to ask if I can schedule a time to talk with them for about 20 minutes."

*These people will be happy to help you, and will give you two or three names and phone numbers.*

## **When you know people who might work NEAR those in your field:**

Sometimes people from your initial contact list will be links to people who are not in your career field, but may work for the kind of organization that hires people in your field. These people are still worth pursuing! As an example, suppose Helen gives Doug the name of a friend, Ivy Hectare, who works at OSU Hospitals in the Training and Development area:

"Hi, my name is Doug Wallboard. A friend of mine, Helen Barnwood, suggested that I call you. Do you have a couple of minutes now, or would it be better for me to call back some other time?" (Assuming that this is a good time to talk, Doug would proceed...) "I'm currently a student at Capital University, and I'm interested in getting some information and advice about using my biology degree in a hospital setting. Could you help me by giving me the name and phone number of someone who works as a research assistant or someone who works in another medical testing area?"

"Sure, Ivy says, "I can think of two people who work here, Janet Styles and Stan Retrograde. I'm sure they'd be happy to talk with you. Let me get their phone numbers for you..."

*You will then call these directly related professional contacts and ask them for an informational interview.*

Ask them for a twenty minute time period where you can meet them at their workplace in order to learn more about their organizations and career fields.

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

## REQUESTING

### BY E-MAIL



This is a great way to initiate contact. Your e-mail should include:

- A brief introduction about yourself and a reference to the person who referred you to them.
- A brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person's field, organization or location.
- Why you would like to talk with them. Be straightforward; tell him/her you are asking for information and advice and would like to set up a time to speak with them.

Finally, proofread all correspondence!

### IN PERSON OR BY PHONE

If you call a potential professional contact, remember that your purpose is to schedule a time to meet with them. Usually they'll be more than willing to take 20-30 minutes to answer your questions. Sometimes the person will want to talk over the phone, but often he or she will invite you to his or her workplace. When you can, choose to meet at their workplace because you'll learn more and make a stronger connection with the person.



See a sample conversation below:

- "Hello, my name is Susan Harris. A friend of mine, Jake Franks, gave me your name. Do you have a couple of minutes now, or would it be better for me to call back some other time?" (Assuming that this is a good time to talk, Susan would proceed...) I'm currently a student at Capital University I'm interested in learning more about public relations. I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I'm sure that my questions could be answered in a 20-30-minute informational interview."

# PREPARING

## DO SOME RESEARCH BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

For an informational interview to be truly effective, you can't just go into it blindly.

Thorough company research is an absolute necessity when you go on a regular job interview. You don't have to do quite as much research for an informational interview, but some degree of research will greatly enhance the quality of informational interviews. If you are informed about the company, you'll be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions. You'll respond thoughtfully to information and any questions the professional contact might ask you. You won't ask questions that could easily have been answered by doing your homework.



Resources include:

- VAULT go to our website [www.capital.edu/careers](http://www.capital.edu/careers) and click on the VAULT logo. Password is 'crusader'
- Website of their organization
- Annual reports
- Other company literature
- Capital's library reference material (ask a reference librarian)

## DRESS APPROPRIATELY

In order to make a good impression and be remembered by the employer, dress as you would for a regular job interview.



## BRING YOUR RESUME AND A PORTFOLIO

Bring a copy of your resume along with you but **DO NOT** produce it unless requested. Keep your resume in your portfolio with your notepad and pen. If you are asked for a resume, encourage them to provide suggestions. If you don't know what a portfolio is, ask us!

# CONDUCTING

## TAKE NOTES

Pretend you are a reporter. **You don't need to write down everything**, but there may be names, phone numbers or other information that you may want to remember.

Be enthusiastic and show interest. Be direct and concise with your questions and answers and do not ramble. Maintain good eye contact and posture. Be positive in your remarks, and reflect a good sense of humor.



## NEVER ASK FOR A JOB

Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not hit them up for a job. The minute you begin trying to get a job, the employer will feel misled. If you discover a job that you *do* want to apply for during the interview, wait until the informational interview is over. The next day, call the employer and tell your professional contact that the informational interview not only confirmed your interest in the field, but also made you aware of a position for which you would like to formally apply.



## QUESTIONS TO ASK

You have arrived and are greeted by the individual at the front desk. When the professional contact comes out to meet you, introduce yourself. Thank your professional contact for his or her willingness to meet with you, and re-emphasize that you are there to learn and gather information about his or her career field.

Pay careful attention to what's said by the person you interview. Ask a question when something isn't clear. Try to keep the conversation friendly, brief, and focused on the professional contact's job and career field.



The next page lists some typical informational interview questions. **Remember that you won't have time to ask all of these questions**, so target the ones you feel will be most useful to you personally. Pick a dozen or so that get at what you most want to know.

## SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



1. What is your job like?
2. Describe a typical day?
3. What do you do?
4. What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
5. What kinds of problems do you deal with?
6. What kinds of decisions do you make?
7. What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
8. How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
9. How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
10. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
11. What other jobs can you get with the same background?
12. What are the various jobs in this field or organization?
13. How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
14. What is the best way to enter this occupation?
15. What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
16. What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
17. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
18. From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
19. What are the major frustrations of this job?
20. What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
21. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
22. What are the educational requirements for this job? What other types of credentials or licenses are required?

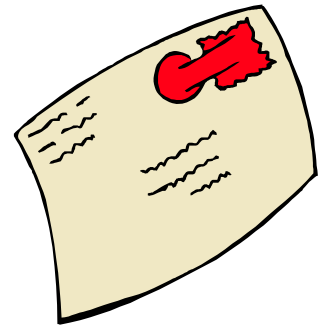
# GROWING YOUR NETWORK

You have spent 20-30 minutes with this person, asking questions, getting advice and sharing a little about yourself. This begins your network of professional contacts. The person has taken time to share with you; in other words, he or she has invested time in you. Most people like their investments to pay off. Most people will feel good about your staying in contact with them. You do not have to call or write every week. **Just keep your professional contact posted on your progress.**



## ALWAYS SEND A NOTE OF THANKS

Be sure to send a thank-you card or letter within one to three days after the interview. This communication is an effective way to keep in touch and to be remembered by people. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for their time. Include your address and phone number under your signature. (See example at the back of this booklet)



# OVERCOMING 'NETWORKING' ANXIETIES

1. Start your networking efforts in settings where you already know people.
2. When making one-on-one contacts, start with those you've been referred to by family and close friends.
3. Write or e-mail before phoning to pave the way.
4. When someone has referred you to a professional contact, have him or her pave the way by calling the new contact first.
5. You will have to call people you don't know (whether you write first or not); just do it. The more you do it, the more comfortable you will become. Remember it is rare that the risk won't be worth it.
6. Plan what you will say before you make the call.
7. Even if you are feeling uneasy, try to smile and project enthusiasm and confidence.
8. Set goals for yourself. For example, make five phone calls a day or add one new person a day to your network. Reward yourself when you reach the goal.
9. Many are shy about networking because we fear rejection. What is the worst that can happen? Someone acts standoffish or someone hesitates to give advice. Don't take it personally. Tell yourself it's no big deal and move on!
10. Learn to laugh at yourself when you make a mistake.

# THANK YOU E-MAIL

(sent immediately after an informational interview)

Name of Professional Contact

Title

Department

Organization

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank the professional contact for the time spent talking with you, helping you to understand the field, sharing insights, whatever. Mention the date of your meeting in your statement.

Mention something significant that you learned or discussed in your meeting (which you wrote down immediately after the interview). Be specific. If possible, tell the professional contact the course of action you will take in the near future. This will make a good lead-in to your first follow-up letter.

Again, but in a different way, say that you appreciate the help. Indicate that you will keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Your name

# MAILED THANK YOU LETTER

(use this format if you are printing and mailing the thank-you)

Your Address  
City, State Zip  
Date  
Phone number  
Email address

Name of Professional Contact  
Title  
Department  
Organization  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank the professional contact for the time spent talking with you, helping you to understand the field, sharing insights, whatever. Mention the date of your meeting in your statement.

Mention something significant that you learned or discussed in your meeting (which you wrote down immediately after the interview). Be specific. If possible, tell the professional contact the course of action you will take in the near future. This will make a good lead-in to your first follow-up letter.

Again, but in a different way, say that you appreciate the help. Indicate that you will keep in touch.

Sincerely,

(your signed name)

Your typed name

# INITIAL RELATIONSHIP E-MAIL

(sent three weeks or less after the thank you)

Name of Professional Contact

Title

Department

Organization

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Indicate that you are bringing your professional contact up to date on your activity and progress. In order to assist with memory, mention a significant interaction between the two of you, or something you learned in your meeting (but not the same thing you wrote in the thank you letter).

Write about what you have accomplished since you last spoke (you should follow up on the course of action you mentioned in your thank you letter). Show the tangible contribution that your professional contact has made to your progress and success. If you have made progress in a number of areas, write two paragraphs.

Thanks again for the help and advice. Add an upbeat final sentence that serves to continue the relationship (e.g., You've been a great help to me!). Include your phone number for their convenience.

Sincerely,

Your name

# ONGOING RELATIONSHIP E-MAIL

(similar letter sent every three weeks after *initial* relationship e-mail)

Name of Professional Contact  
Title  
Department  
Organization

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Indicate that you are bringing your professional contact up to date on your activity and progress over the last three or four weeks.

Write about what you have accomplished since you last wrote. Did you make appointments with the people who have been recommended to you? Have you already seen them? What did you learn? To whom did *they* refer you? (This cycle continues in subsequent letters.)

Make a statement about what you plan to do next. Show that you have a plan, that you are organized, and that you are actively pursuing your objective.

Sincerely,

Your name

# FINAL RELATIONSHIP E-MAIL

(sent to *all* professional contacts after accepting a position)

Name of Professional Contact  
Title  
Department  
Organization

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Let each professional contact know that you have accepted a position. Share the specifics: title, organization, starting date.

Explain how this person's help was instrumental in your obtaining this position. Mention professional contacts, information, insights...any aspect of your interaction which was a benefit to your job search.

Express your most sincere appreciation for all that has been done for you, and mention keeping in touch with them in the future.

Sincerely,

Your name