

Networking



Networking is the process of making intentional, career-related contacts through acquaintances and referrals and is an important process in any career or job search. Often referred to as “the hidden job market” because most positions are never posted.

It is the #1 way to find a job!

Benefits to networking are:

- Strengthening business connections by exchanging information
- Advancing your career
- Gaining access to job opportunities
- Gaining more knowledge about a particular topic or career information
- Getting career advice and support
- Building confidence

Networking Steps:

Step One: Prepare to Network

- Identify your network: friends, classmates, family, community members, professors, group members, etc.
- Set a goal: think about what you want to accomplish – a job or internship, learn about a career path, or decide on a major.
- Decide what you need to learn and what you have to offer.
- Build your professional image:
 - » Have your resume reviewed.
 - » Update your online profile (see LinkedIn packet for more details).
 - » Get business cards at HireOSUgrads.com.
- Locate networking opportunities:
 - » In-person events such as: professional associations (student chapters), student organizations and clubs, OSU Alumni chapters, industry conferences, special interest groups, volunteer activities, etc.
 - » LinkedIn.
 - » AlumniFire (virtual networking platform).
 - » Career Shift (job search and virtual networking platform).
- Prepare questions:
 - » Informational Interviews (see the last page of this packet for a list of topics and questions).
- Prepare a 30-second introduction or “elevator pitch” to market yourself. In this intro, you will need to mention several key points:
 - » Your name, major, and expected graduation (if you’re an alumnus, mention your degree(s)).
 - » School or universities attended.
 - » Past or current work experiences.
 - » Your career goals (if you know them).

Step Two: Network

- Be specific about your purpose – refer back to your goal(s).
- Discuss your qualifications in regards to the information received from the contact.
- Be courteous to everyone.
- Ask questions.
- Ask for referrals.

Step Three: Follow-Up

- Follow-up with a thank you note or email.
- Keep in touch with your contacts.
 - » Use LinkedIn to keep in contact.
- Maintain records of your network contacts and how you know them.
 - » Note how, what, why, where you met to help you remember.

8 Tips for Navigating A Networking Event

Have a Goal

Before you get to the event, ask yourself "why am I going?" Come up with two outcomes you hope to get out of the event (ex: meeting 3 new people or getting a new job lead). Knowing ahead of time what you're hoping to accomplish will help you stay focused.



Dress to Impress

When planning your outfit, pick something professional. You won't make a good impression looking disheveled or overly casual. But also, pick something that makes you feel good!



Bring Business Cards

Bring more business cards than you think you'll need. You don't want to miss out on a great connection if you run out of cards.



Listen First, Then Speak

Let the other person speak first! Asking the other person about their background and work will show that you're interested in more than just your own opportunities. Use open-ended questions like, "How did you get involved in your field of study?"



Make an Effective Introduction

Your introduction should be a minute or less and include your background, skills, and education as it relates to the person or position you are interested in.



Get to the Point

When it's your turn to share, state what you do in just 2-3 sentences. You can go into greater detail later, but people will lose interest quickly if you can't cut to the chase.



Gracefully Exit

Once the conversation has slowed down and you are ready to network with others in the room, exit your current conversation respectfully. Don't just abruptly end the conversation and walk away.



Follow Up

Within 24 hours after the event, send follow-up messages to anyone you met that you would like to continue networking with. Personalize each email, letting them know you enjoyed meeting them and mention something that you spoke about together.



Informational Interviews:

An informational interview is an informal conversation you can have with someone working in an area of interest to you. It is an effective research tool and is best done after preliminary online research and an idea of a career direction. Most people enjoy taking a few moments out of their day to reflect on their professional life and give advice to someone with an interest in their field. Keep in mind, it is not a job interview, nor is it a means to find job openings.

Steps to Informational Interviews:

1. Identify a professional in a career field(s) of interest. If you do not have a career field to explore, talk to a Career Consultant by scheduling an appointment at [HireOSUgrads.com](https://hireosu.com).
 - Identify a professional by:
 - » Speaking with faculty, family, friends, and co-workers for in-network connections.
 - » Using LinkedIn's alumni search tool to identify OSU alumni working in the field.
 - » Searching the OSU Hire System for company contacts who are in your field of interest.
2. Reach out to your contact to arrange a meeting. Use this example as a starting point:

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

My name is _____. I am a junior at Oklahoma State University majoring in _____. I am currently exploring careers in _____. I was referred to you by _____/I found your information through _____. Would you be able to speak for 20-30 minutes, either in person or by phone, and talk about your job and career path? I am available all next week between 8am – 12pm if you would like to set up a time to speak.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Your Name

3. Prepare your questions: What do you want to know about the job, department, company, or career path? Does this position align with your interests, skills, and values? Then, create your questions accordingly. (See example questions on the next page.)
 - Be conscious of the time by arriving/calling on time and keeping within the agreed upon time limit. Remember the interviewee is taking time out of their day to meet with you. Show your gratitude and thank the interviewee for meeting with you.
4. Follow-Up.
 - Send a thank you note or email within 24 hours of your meeting. Free thank you notes can be found at Career Services in 360 Student Union.
5. Reflect on the experience.
 - Informational Interview Reflection:
 - » After speaking with your contact, what did you learn about this career?
 - » What was the most useful piece of information you took away from your conversation?
 - » Is this a career you will consider pursuing? Why or why not?
 - » What steps will you take next to either pursue this career or explore other areas?

What to Ask :

Creating open-ended questions will help you gain a greater understanding of:

- The interviewee's job and responsibilities.
- The preparation needed to pursue this career (academic requirements, skills, experiences, certifications).
- The interviewee's unique career path.
- What it is like working at the interviewee's specific company (company culture, opportunities for advancement, plans for growth, company needs)?

Example Questions:

- What are your main responsibilities as a _____?
- What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
- What do you like most about your work?
- What do you like least about your work?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?
- What are some common career paths in this field?
- What kinds of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
- What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- How did you begin your career?
- How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
- What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?
- How relevant to your work is your undergraduate major?
- What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?
- What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
- What are the qualifications of the person most recently hired at my level?
- What are the most effective strategies for seeking a position in this field?
- Can you recommend trade journals, magazines or professional associations which would be helpful for my professional development?
- If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? If not, what would you change?
- I've read that the entry-level salary range for this field is usually in the range of _____? Does this fit with what you've seen? (Don't ask about the person's actual salary.)
- What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job (or field)?
- Can you suggest anyone else I could contact for additional information?