

Networking

MIT Career Development Center □ 12-170 □ (617) 253-4733 □ <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/>

What is Networking?

Networking is the process of utilizing and discovering connections between people. It requires moving beyond one's immediate network and tapping into other people's networks. This involves talking to people in both formal and informal settings, such as at a professional conference or presentation or even at a family social gathering. Networking can serve as a tool to explore a field of interest as well as lead to potential job opportunities. Informational discussions with professionals can help an individual select a major, narrow an area of interest, and select a career path. In addition, job searchers can use networking to receive information about job openings, build contacts, obtain referrals, and improve their interviewing skills.

An estimated 60-80% of jobs are found informally through networking with direct or indirect contacts such as friends, relatives, and alumni. During periods of economic difficulty, networking is an essential way to improve one's job search and increase the likelihood of finding a job. When jobs are scarce, utilizing all connections and conducting informational interviews becomes especially critical.

Who Does a Network Include?

- Relatives
- Friends
- Classmates
- Alumni
- Professors, Graduate Teaching Assistants
- Coworkers
- Industry Professionals
- Services Professionals
(Doctor, Dentist, Lawyer, Banker,
Accountant, Insurance Agent)
- Neighbors

Where Can Networking Take Place?

- Classrooms: Professors and Classmates
- Labs: UROP Supervisor, Lab Group
- Career Fairs
- Professional Associations and Conferences
- Student Groups and Activities
- Social Events – Through Family and Friends
- Arranged Meetings with People of Interest
- Dormitories/Fraternities/Sororities
- Online: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and much more

How to Start Networking

Networking, like any other skill, can be learned and mastered with experience and by following some of the guidelines suggested below. Start by networking with people that you already know and talk to them about you want to do. Ask whether they know of any companies or organizations doing the type of work that interests you. Do they know anyone in a related area of work or study who might talk to you? Networking etiquette requires that you do not ask for a job. The focus of networking is to meet many people in your field of interest and find out more about the jobs they do.

Networking Opportunities at MIT and Beyond

Career Fairs

<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/events/careerfairs.html>

MIT Alumni ICAN Program

<http://alum.mit.edu/cs/ican/>

MIT Alumni Clubs

<http://alum.mit.edu/ccg/clubs/>

MIT Student Groups

<http://web.mit.edu/life/>

Employer Presentations

<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/events/presentations.html>

MIT Career Development Center Workshops

<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/events/workshops.html>

Professional Organizations

<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/jobs/proforg.html>

Networking Continued

Making Contact

Once you identify someone with whom you would like to network, you should contact that person via email or phone to begin the conversation. The initial interaction should include an introduction as well as a description of how you obtained the person's name. You can then proceed to ask questions about the company, career path or whatever you are interested in exploring. Even if your goal is to find job opportunities, you should never directly ask for a job. Requesting an informational interview is a good next step to further the conversation and delve deeper into your questions, which could include a discussion about career paths within the company. Your initial contact could also be a request for an informational interview.

What To Do Before Making Initial Contact

- Know the purpose of your call/email/inquiry – What do you want to know?
- Know yourself – What are your goals and interests?
- Know the person and company with whom you are speaking
- Research the field to avoid asking questions you could answer on your own
- Develop an introductory script which summarizes your skills, experience and goals, this is especially useful at career fairs and other similar venues in which you will be approaching targeted companies or individuals
- Practice your script with a friend or a professor
- Remember to prepare open-ended questions

Scheduling and Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Request an informational interview as a way to get more detailed information
- If you don't get a response from your email or phone request, keep trying
- Prepare for an informational interview as you would an actual job interview

During Your Informational Interview

- Be courteous and professional at all times
- Avoid talking too long – Leave time to hear what the other person has to say
- Watch your body language – Do not fidget, play with your hair, or chew gum
- Shake your contact's hand firmly and make comfortable eye contact
- Be enthusiastic and smile
- Try to leave the meeting with three names of other individuals to contact

Follow-Up After Informational Interview

- Follow-up with a thank-you letter or email thanking the person for their time
- When you meet with additional referrals, write an update letter to the person who referred them

Tips for Effective Networking

- Assess your conversations afterwards – What information helped you? What areas interested you?
- Keep a journal recording who you spoke with, the information you received and your impressions
- Networking should be an ongoing effort - Stay in touch with contacts and look for new networking opportunities
- Networking can take place anywhere, at any time!

Resources

- MIT Career Development Center-Networking Workshop <http://web.mit.edu/career/www/workshops/networking/>
- Informational Interviewing Tutorial http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html
- Networking Tips for Shy Job Seekers <http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/networking/19980615-tullier.html>
- *A Foot In The Door: Networking Your Way Into The Hidden Job Market*. Hansen, Katharine, Berkeley, Ten Speed Press, 2000. (Dewey Library call number: HF5382.7.H354 2000)
- *LinkedWorking*, Frank Agin & Lewis Howes, Four Eighteen Enterprises, February, 2009 (Resource on using LinkedIn. Available in the Career Development Center)

Wetfeet Guides on Networking

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