HOW-TO

NETWORK

HOW DO I START?

Most networking begins through casual conversation. Strike up a conversation with the people you meet in your normal routine. You never know who may have an aunt or a brother or a colleague in your field.

THE FIRST IMPRESSION

- Introduce yourself and establish rapport
- Ask questions to learn about the person you meet
- Create a connection between the two of you ("it sounds like we have a lot of the same ideas about our fields of interest.")
- Wrap up the conversation with a promise to keep in touch and then do so by following up

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWING UP

- The #1 rule of networking is to stay in touch
- Write a brief note to those you meet
- Follow-up when you say you will
- Keep track of your correspondence with each person in your network, including dates and details of messages and conversations; questions and answers from information interviews; notes from office visits; dates you have agreed to follow up, etc.

THE NEXT STEP

Networking is a continual life long process. When you are networking, always look for the next step in gaining information about your field. When casually networking, ask for an information interview.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO...

- Jot notes in a small notebook
- Keep one hand free at all times to shake hands with people you meet
- Dress professional, sharp and modest
- Thank your network partners and keep in touch with them
- Develop lasting relationships, not just contacts
- Look for ways to help the people in your network

DON'T...

- Brag or exaggerate the truth in your conversations
- Spend too much time in unfocused conversation; respect and appreciate their time
- Gossip or share inappropriately; stay professional and relevant
- Allow your networking relationship to become one-sided
- Ask personal questions or about money/salary
- Directly ask for a job

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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

HOW IS INFORMATION INTERVIEWING DIFFERENT FROM NETWORKING?

Information interviewing is a piece of the networking process. In an information interview you have the opportunity to explore your field of interest through a structured, longer conversation with someone already working in that field.

GETTING READY

Sometimes the phrase "informational interviewing" may sound uninviting to your contacts as it sounds very similar to an "interview" for an employment position. You may wish to ask for an "information meeting" instead. Please remember to use the information interview as an opportunity to gather information and seek advice, not to ask outright for an internship or employment opportunity. It is often appropriate, however, to ask the person you speak with for advice on ways you might pursue employment or internship opportunities in your field of interest and give specifics about your search.

Before you jump into this valuable exercise, you will need to have a solid understanding of who you are (self-assessment) and a basic understanding of your fields of interest (career exploration) in order to answer questions from the professionals you meet. If you have not explored these issues, call the Career Development Center to begin this process.

ARRANGING YOUR MEETINGS

- Compile a list of open-ended questions that you would like answered
- Arrange a meeting at a convenient location and time, preferably at his or her office
- If you're meeting in a public place, give an appropriate description of yourself so he or she can find you
- A phone conversation is also appropriate. However, if in differing time zones, make sure to confirm the time he or she is available to talk

DURING & AFTER

- Be prepared when you meet. You may want to prioritize your list of questions — start with a topic that is easy to discuss and build rapport
- Remember to listen! Avoid interrupting the speaker
- Take brief notes during the conversation
- Give the professional the opportunity to ask you questions at the end of the conversation
- After the meeting, **send a note thanking the professional** for setting aside time to meet with you. You should mention one or two things that really stood out as valuable information that you gained

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

- How would you describe your current role and professional journey?
- What advice would you have for me as I consider entering the field?

WORK CULTURE

- What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
- What part of your job is most challenging?
- What do you find most enjoyable?
- Which seasons of the year are busiest in your job?
- Does the work involve frequent travel or late nights?

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

- Is this field growing?
- What developments, new technology, etc., could affect future opportunities?
- Why do people leave this field?
- Who are the most important people in the industry today?
- How does your company compare to others in the same industry?

MONEY & ADVANCEMENT

- What do you think is the earning potential for this field?
- How, and how often, are people in this field promoted?
- What is the background of most senior-level executives?

Hope COLLEGE

BOERIGTER CENTER FOR CALLING AND CAREER
DeWitt Center, First Floor | Holland, MI 49423
careers@hope.edu
616.395.7950