

## What is networking?

Simply stated, networking is relationship building. It is the process of making connections with people in order to gather information and expand your knowledge about jobs, internships, career fields, graduate schools, and/or geographical areas.

## What is the purpose of a network?

The purpose of a network is to develop a professional support system that can assist you in growing as a professional and, in turn, make it possible for you to encourage other people in the future. It can also assist you in collecting information and resources about the job market and occupations, as well as *develop job leads and referrals*.

**Making contacts with people can help you find a job, as most employers would rather hire someone they know or someone who was recommended by an acquaintance.**

## How do I build a network?

There are multiple ways to begin building your network:

1. **Make a list of all (yes, all) the people you know.** This can include relatives, neighbors, previous or current supervisors, faculty, fellow students, etc. (See *Developing Your Network worksheet for help*).
2. **Join online professional networking groups**, such as LinkedIn, or professional **student organizations**.
3. **Join the College of Charleston Alumni & Student Career Network group on LinkedIn** to connect with CofC alumni and students who have volunteered to be a resource for you.
4. **Attend career fairs** to speak with recruiters from various companies and organizations.



## Then what do I do?

Systematically contact these people to ask if they can refer you to someone who works in an occupation of interest to you, or if they can provide you with advice in conducting your job search.

Another method to tap the hidden job market is by making “cold calls.” You might contact the local Chamber of Commerce for employer listings, or obtain company information from the Career Center on companies where you would like to work.

## Before you begin contacting people, decide what type of information you want from the contact, such as:

- ✓ Company information
- ✓ Information about the career field
- ✓ A referral for someone else who may be able to help you
- ✓ Advice on conducting your job search
- ✓ An opportunity to job shadow

## How do I contact these people?

In many cases, you will want to set up a brief meeting, or **informational interview**, with the contact.

To do this, call or write to the individual and say something similar to, “Hello, my name is Laura Scott and (so and so) suggested I speak to you because I am interested in finding out more about the public relations field. Might you have some time to meet with me and provide me with some information on the industry?” If the answer is yes, arrange an appointment time for either a face-to-face or phone meeting. If the answer is negative, say, “Could you recommend someone else I could contact?” Then repeat the process.

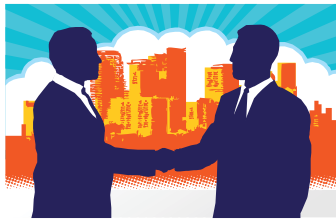
Begin by calling or writing to the people on your list who you can talk to most easily. It does get easier with each call and/or email!

**Remember, an informational interview is not a job interview...but may bring you a job lead or referral.**

## Use the following suggestions when calling contacts and referrals to set up informational interviews:

- Write an outline of what you are going to say on the phone. This will help you be less nervous.
- If you are calling as the result of a referral, use the name of the person who referred you to begin the conversation.
- Mention that you need only about 20 minutes of the person's time for the informational interview.
- Express the need for a personal interview as opposed to a phone conversation.
- If someone sounds busy, he/she probably is. Ask if there is a better time to talk.

When you go to your informational interview, arrive early and dress appropriately. Write out questions you will ask in advance.



## What should I ask during an informational interview?

During the informational interview, ask how the person got started, what they like and don't like about their job, company, and industry. Ask for information about career opportunities in the field. Most important, ask who you should contact regarding possible opportunities. (*But do NOT ask for an internship or job!*) This referral information is the key to getting results.

Ask open-ended questions (not yes/no):

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you like (and dislike) about this job (organization)? Why?
- How did college prepare you for this job?
- Where do you see the industry heading in the next few years?
- What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- What are entry-level positions in your field (organization)? Can you describe them?
- Is there any type of training program? What skills and what experience are necessary?
- What are the current career opportunities in the industry?
- Is there anything else I should know about the industry?
- Who else would you recommend I speak to for advice in this field?

Finally, **be organized; keep records**, including the date of every contact you make with every person; and **take notes** during the informational interviews.

---

## What to do after making contact?

- ✓ **Send a thank you note immediately.** Personalize your letter by referencing something from your conversation that was particularly helpful. This is not only courteous, but helps set you apart as a professional while keeping your network alive.
- ✓ **Reflect on the conversation.** Review your notes to make sure the information is clear. Ask yourself: *What did I learn from this interview (positive and negative impressions)? How does what I learned fit with my own interests, abilities, goals, values, etc.? What else would be helpful to know? What plan of action can I make?*
- ✓ **Contact people referred to you by the person you spoke with for the informational interview.** Make sure to mention the mutual contact, as well as any particular reason why the person you originally spoke with thought this new person might be helpful. Remember to abide by the above rules regarding timing, etiquette, and thank you notes.
- ✓ **STAY IN TOUCH!** Keep your contacts informed. If your original contact referred you to someone who was helpful, send him/her a quick note with that information. Likewise, if a particular resource or research avenue was fruitful, let the person know that as well. Networking contacts - especially CofC alumni - are often sincerely interested in helping if they can and are curious about what ultimately happens in your career adventures!

### CAREER CENTER

843-953-5692

[careercenter.cofc.edu](http://careercenter.cofc.edu)

Check for job listings on CISTERNonline

### ALUMNI RELATIONS

843-953-5630

[alumni.cofc.edu](http://alumni.cofc.edu)

Join the Alumni Association & LinkedIn Groups