

# How to Build A Professional Network

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## Speaker Disclosure

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## Outline

- Professional Networking– the basics
- Networking Events
- Networking Tools
- Networking Challenges and Advice
- Social media and networking as a student
- Building a *Brand*

## Networking?

### Professional Networking

- Networking: A process that fosters the exchange of information and ideas among individuals or groups that share a common interest
- 2 Types – Business and Social
  - Goal: Building of relationships
  - Business: Objective is to form relationships that will improve organizational success or become employed

## Why is networking so important?

### Professional Networking

#### Networking is not about selling yourself

- Networking isn't, "Hi, what can you do for me?" but rather: "Hi. Let's get to know each other. What can I do for you?"

### **Networking is not about selling yourself**

- Networking isn't, "Hi, what can you do for me?" but rather: "Hi. Let's get to know each other. What can I do for you?"
- It's about giving to get, paying it forward, and building relationships

### **How Important is Networking?**

#### **When and where does networking happen?**

- Career Fairs
- Conferences
- Religious group gatherings
- Community Events
- Chamber of Commerce Events
- In reality...all the time – Planned Happenstance

### **Basic Networking Components**

- Know your goals
- Who to network with
- Where to network
- Providing value - What can I offer each person?
- Follow Up

“Setting **goals** is crucial, because it determines how you prioritize your networking energies. Where do you want to go? What do you want other people’s help in doing?”

- *Danny R. Faught*

### **Know Your Goals**

- What are you wanting to accomplish from networking?
- Examples:
  - A better job
  - Career change
  - Advice
  - Sales
- Define exactly what you are seeking to yourself, or it will never sound clear to the person you're trying to connect with
- Once you know what you want, the easiest way to get it is to become a **value provider**

## **How to prepare for networking events**

- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - Who am I?
    - If you don't know, how will you show or tell some one else?
  - What have I done up until this point?
    - Being able to describe this is essential to establishing credibility
  - What do I want to do in the future?
    - Having clearly defined goals provides context as to why you are networking
  - What do you need or want from those attending the event?
    - Establishing a purpose for your engagement gives structure to your conversations

## **Networking Event Advice**

- Dress professionally
- **BE PREPARED!**
- Develop a “personal commercial”

## **Practice!**

- Develop and improve your “Elevator Pitch” - What is this?
  - Most successful pitches are simple and quick
- Consider your audience
  - Individual? Company? Industry?
- Know yourself – REFLECTION
  - Educational background
  - Key Strengths
  - What do you want them to know about you?
  - Why are you giving this speech?
- Write it down – Approximately 90 words

## **Key Components of an Elevator Pitch**

- Introduction
  - Name and a Firm Handshake

- Who are you?
  - What's your major? Class?
  - What are your strengths?
  - What do you offer?
  
- What are you looking for from the person your speaking to?
  - Information? Internship? Job? – Be Specific
  
  - Tell the person why you are interested in them/their company/their school

### **Networking Event Advice**

- Dress professionally
- **BE PREPARED!**
- Develop a “personal commercial”
- Know how to engage people
- The more information you have, the easier it is to establish rapport and build relationships

### **Conversation Starters**

- Go fishing at the food table
  - “Everything looks so good, I don't know what to get. What are you going to have?”
- Find someone who is alone
  - “These networking events can be so crazy. Would you mind if I joined you over here where it's a bit more quiet?”
- Give compliments
  - “I love your shoes!”
- Just say hello
  - “Hi, my name is....”

### **Do's and Don'ts of Networking**

#### **DO'S**

- The thank you's
- Develop lasting relationships
- Always look for ways to reciprocate in the future
- Remember to ask “what is your story?” and “what advice do you have for me as I enter this field?”
- Listen!!!

## **Do's and Don'ts of Networking**

### **DO'S**

- The thank you's
- Listen!!!
- Develop lasting relationships
- Always look for ways to reciprocate in the future
- Remember to ask "what is your story?" and "what advice do you have for me as I enter this field?"

### **DONT'S**

- Brag or exaggerate
- Spend too much time on unrelated topic
- Gossip
- Let your relationship become one sided
- Forget to keep in touch
- Ask personal questions about salary
- Don't just ask for a job

## **Networking Tools**

### **A Pocket Full of Business Cards**

#### **3 Rules to Smart Business Card Etiquette**

- Rule #1: Keep your business card to yourself
- Rule #2: Give your business card to someone when she asks for it
- Rule #3: Don't waste contact information

### **A Few Quick Tips**

- Have at least 15-20 for each event
- Keep in carrying case to protect from fold and creases
- Do not carry in your back pocket (no one wants to receive a card that you've sat on)
- Every professional, even if you are currently unemployed or a student, should have a business card
  - Should include name, contact information, (including LinkedIn profile & personal website address), and title
- Ask each person you meet for two cards--one to pass on to someone else and one to keep
  - When given a business card from someone, politely say thank you and look at for a few seconds before putting it away
- Take notes on the back of the business card

## **Networking Challenges**

### **Challenges**

- Difficulty approaching someone

## **The Rule of 3**

### **Body Language**

- Observe how people stand, and how they are physically grouped together
- Look for open groups vs. closed groups

### **Body Language**

- Try this instead:
  - ❖ “Keep an open stance with all body parts aligned”
  - ❖ “Make good eye contact”
  - ❖ “Smile”

### **Body Language**

- Don't create barriers between you and the other person:
  - ❖ “Avoid darting eyes’
  - ❖ “Don't fold your arms...”
  - ❖ “Resist the urge to look at the floor”

## **Challenges**

- Difficulty approaching someone
- Difficult to start a conversation

## **Add A Conversation starter to your nametag**

## **Challenges**

- Difficulty approaching someone
- Difficult to start a conversation
- Difficult to make small talk and continue conversation

## **Conversation Starters You'll Actually Use**

- “So , what exactly do you do at\_\_\_\_\_?” [then shut up and listen!]
- “Hi , please tell me about you?”
- “What got you involved in this organization/event?”
- “I really like your \_\_\_\_\_”
- “May as well chat if we're in line for\_\_\_\_\_.”

- “How did you get involved with this line of work and what have you enjoyed most from your experience?”
- “What can you tell me about \_\_\_\_\_?”
- “What is the greatest opportunity for \_\_\_\_\_ ? Biggest challenge?”
- “What do you do when you’re not \_\_\_\_\_?”

### **Ask Powerful Networking Questions**

- “What are the challenges you've been facing in your industry?”
- “What do you do when you're not working?”
- “Is there anything you need or are specifically looking for, in case I happen to know anyone?”
- “How did you get involved in...?”
- “What made you decide to go into the \_\_\_\_\_ business?”
- “What advice would you give me if I wanted to be successful in your line of work?”
- “What do you love/enjoy most about what you do?”
- How you can be of service to them.”
- “Is there anything you're specifically looking for in that area?”
- “What ways have you found to be the most effective for promoting your business/organization/product?”
- “What would make a person/company an ideal client/customer for you?”
- “What separates your business/company/organization from the competition?”
- “What significant changes have you seen take place in your profession/area of expertise through the years?”

### **Challenges**

- Difficulty approaching someone
- Difficult to start a conversation
- Difficult to make small talk and continue conversation
- Difficult to end conversations

### **Observe the 5-Minute Rule**

After you leave a networking event...

After you leave a networking event...

After you leave a networking event

Build and MAINTAIN connections

## **Network Tracking System**

- Start a *Microsoft Excel spreadsheet* or an *Access Database* to keep track of the following:
  - Name of the person
  - Where you met her/him
  - What you spoke about
  - Where she/he works
  - What she/he is interested in
  - How you might be able to be of benefit to her/him in the future
  - How she/he may be of help to you
  - Who she/he connected you with
  - When you follow up

Remember: Relationships take time to develop

## **Networking & Social Media**

**extensions of, but NOT replacements for personal networks**

### **What's the Difference?**

- PERSONAL IMAGE
  - Play games
  - Share photos, videos, stories
  - Provide relationship status
  - Entertaining and informal
- PROFESSIONAL IMAGE
  - Maintain business contacts
  - Get introduced
  - Recommend and endorse
  - Find, post, or forward jobs

Using Social Media as a Networking Tool

## **Twitter/ Instagram**

- Form a creative bio
- Generate the conversation
- Follow people in the industry
- Retweet and interact
- Shout people out– get noticed!

## **Blogging**

- Write about relevant topics in the industry
- Become a guest blogger
- Ask to interview professionals
- Write reviews on related products
- Be interactive in your comments sections

## **Networking as a Student**

### **Clubs/Organizations**

- Be an active member
- Reach out to other schools with the same/similar club
- Take advantage of conferences
- Aim for leadership positions

## **Greek Life**

- Reach out to alumni networks
- Stay informed about regional/national events
- Connect with brothers/sisters in the field you are interested in
- Take advantage of connections other members may have

## **Campus Resources**

- Attend on campus events
- Find a mentor at school
- Make faculty/staff aware of your interests
- Volunteer to assist at functions where important people may be
- Look at advertisements for campus happenings that may benefit you

## **Build a Personal Brand**

- Figure out what you want others to know you for
- Understand what you are best at and maximize on that
- Create your own reputation so that people look for YOU
- Treat your personal brand as something important and valuable

**Practice!**

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