

Networking, Personal Branding and LinkedIn

Building personal relationships and working with your contacts and leveraging LinkedIn are some of the most effective ways to land a job or internship.

Introduction to Networking

Although networking seems to come naturally to some, many job seekers are intimidated by the process. But in today's highly competitive world, being a confident and effective networker is what sets you apart from the crowd. From learning how to introduce yourself, entering a crowded room or asking someone for an informational interview, practicing networking skills can make a big difference in building an effective personal and professional network.

Your 30-second Self-introduction (Elevator Pitch)

Creating a 30-second self-introduction or "elevator pitch" is a good place to start. It is your quick, personal selling statement. It can be used when riding in an elevator with the person standing next to you, and can also serve as the foundation for cover letters, email introductions and meeting employers at career fairs. Your pitch should make a good first impression and include the following:

- Name
- Education (school and major)
- Experience
- Interests, talents, skills
- Aspirations

An example of an effective self-introduction would be the following:

"Hi, my name is Susan Smith and I am currently a first-year MBA candidate at USC Marshall concentrating in marketing and consumer package goods. I have created successful marketing campaigns through my experience with General Mills promotions and look forward to continuing my studies and gaining experience in the consumer packaged goods field."

Be flexible and creative when crafting your 30-second introduction. Keep in mind also that your self-introduction will change along the way depending on the situation and to whom you are talking to. Always think about your introduction and adjust it accordingly (i.e. career fairs, networking events, social activities, etc.)

Become an Effective Networker

- Be friendly, personable, courteous, flexible and open.

- Have good self-esteem; you're as good as everyone else in the room.
- Be brave; you need to be when you walk into a room full of strangers.
- Be generous; networking is about giving first and receiving second.
- Be persistent and resilient. Why bother networking if you don't follow up?
- Ask the right questions in an open and interesting manner.
- Listen actively.

Good networking is a win-win situation for both you and your prospective employers. A successful job search often begins with one-on-one contacts that result in strong job leads. The Department of Labor estimates that up to 75 percent of positions are filled without advertising. If you are solely relying on job postings as your primary job search strategy, you're only going to see approximately 25 percent of what's out there.

As part of your Career Action Plan, market research includes networking or using external resources to identify which functions, industries and regions can best utilize your unique set of interests, skills and experiences.

Meeting people gives you the opportunity to learn from them and to build your personal brand and network. Skillful networking is the best way to tap into the hidden market in which job openings are often filled through word of mouth or personal referrals.

Networking is usually not a formalized process, it is often an informal discussion with people you already know, or have just met. In fact, students network all the time and don't even realize it.

Networking takes place whenever you:

- Meet with faculty or staff – especially a career advisor
- Attend employer information sessions or career related activities
- Meet guest speakers in class or through a student organization
- Talk with other students to learn of their experiences
- Talk with family, friends and other acquaintances about their work
- Post messages on social media, especially LinkedIn or web blogs
- Volunteer for a community service activity

Students will be well served to view these interactions as generally part of the overall interview and selection process, and act accordingly. *Remember, you are making impressions as you broaden your network.*

Through networking, you can:

- Get your message out and publicize your availability
- Gather marketplace information and industry trends
- Accumulate information on target organizations
- Get advice and ideas

- Locate sponsors, mentors and job leads
- Generate referrals that further build your network
- Develop life-long contacts that may help you later

Building Your Personal Brand

Social Media

Think of your online profiles, posts, and tweets as a dynamic resume – an online presentation of your personal brand. They reveal your interests, personality, and expertise. Spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs may seem more personal, while LinkedIn is clearly a venue for professional networking and job searching. But even with the strictest privacy settings, no social space is truly private, so heed our suggestions to protect your online reputation. On the other hand, don't be afraid to be yourself; you'll make your best impression if there's a real human behind your online identity.

How to Tend to Your Network

Networking sites have redefined how employers, alumni and students interact and network. In a recent survey of recruiters, more than 90 percent are currently using social networking, specifically LinkedIn, to recruit. **Your online brand is as important today as having strong interviewing skills and a polished resume.**

Networking online doesn't need to be time consuming. You can develop your professional reputation and help others in the process through simple etiquette practices that require only a few minutes each day:

- a. Be the first to have a point of view. Share relevant news articles and add value by including observations.
- b. Let them know they've been heard. Listen to what your network has to say and make an informed suggestion or relevant introduction.
- c. Establish yourself as the go-to-person. Consider connecting your LinkedIn and Twitter accounts to establish greater visibility.
- d. Try to add a least one new person to your network a week. Growing networks are far more effective than stagnant ones.



LinkedIn Profile – A LinkedIn profile can be a window to potential employers and the first place where recruiters and alumni look when seeking talent.

Finding Alumni Contacts with LinkedIn – Alumni can be your most valuable asset for your job search and LinkedIn makes it convenient to find and connect with alums. Remember, it is important to have a professional, compelling LinkedIn profile in order to build lasting connections with alumni.

How to Make Connections

- You can search by someone’s name, company, location or industry. When connecting with someone you do not know, always make sure you send a customized message instead of using LinkedIn’s default wording.

How to Find Alumni

- Alumni can be your most valuable asset during a job search. Finding and connecting with alumni in LinkedIn is easier than ever. Use one of these three ways:

1. University Page

- a. Go to the education link in the interest tab
- b. Type in your school name
- c. Narrow your search according to your goals, including years attended, where they live, company, industry, or functional area.

2. Simple Search

- a. Click on the drop down arrow to the left of the search box
- b. Scroll down and select universities
- c. Type in the school name
- d. Search by companies where they work and by what they do

3. Advanced Search

- a. Click on the “advanced search” link to the right of the basic search box
- b. Search by a wide range of fields

Once you find the alumni you would like to connect with, click on Connect if you know the contact, or send an Inmail to get introduced by someone who is already in your network as a first-degree connection.

REMEMBER: Whether you are connecting for the first time or reaching out to someone who is already a first-degree connection, do not ask for a job. LinkedIn is a community that is for building relationships. If you ask for a job, you will certainly turn off potentially valuable members of your network.

Following Companies

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Joining Groups

There are many different groups and organizations to join on LinkedIn. Put relevant terms in the search bar, and filter by “Groups.”

Join groups that fit your interests, and participate in relevant discussions as you see fit.

1. Go to Interests tab from your LinkedIn profile
2. Select Education (University of Southern California or Marshall School of Business or any school you attended)
3. Narrow your search by location, company, industry or functional area, etc.
4. Click to connect or Send Inmail to get introduced by someone in your network