

Building a Professional Community through Networking

What is networking?

Connecting with people in your field of interest or a related field of interest, to assist you in learning about, and landing career and job opportunities.

Why should I network?

It will assist you in clearly defining your job and career interests, and help you uncover the “hidden job market” that will lead to more and better job opportunities. If you do not network you are limiting your job prospects to about 20% of what is actually available to you. No kidding.

Where do I find contacts?

Professional societies
University career offices
Social Networks
Undergrad professors
Industry directories

Classrooms
Alumni associations
Clubs and student groups
Visiting faculty

Thesis advisor/committee members
Previous jobs (other students/post-docs/bosses)

How do I make contact?

- Phone calls or emails – Contacting someone you were referred to (emails are best these days)
- “Cold” calling – Contacting someone you don’t know to begin establishing a professional relationship
- Direct contact – Walking up to a professional and beginning a conversation at a job fair, social occasion, seminar visit, conference, etc.
- Chance meeting – Striking up a conversation with someone in a social or informal setting; Michigan events, graduate student recruiting weekends
- Social Networking via LinkedIn or other

How do I prepare myself?

1. Determine what you want to know. Are you networking for career exploration or to identify an actual job prospect, or both?
2. Career exploration: Develop a list of questions for career exploration or “informational interviewing.” (See attached handout.)
3. Determine how you want to introduce yourself.
4. Determine how you want to describe your background in the conversation.
5. Determine what might be next steps after the conversation.

After the contact, what do I do?

Begin a contact information sheet organized in a contact binder or folder:

- Record key points of the conversation—What did you learn, what were the answers to your questions?
- Write down any additional lead provided to you by the contact--such as new ideas you learned and additional people he or she suggested you contact.
- Write down your next steps following this contact. e.g., Do you plan to follow-up again? If so, when? Do you need to send materials to this contact—a resume or sample of your work? etc.
- Send a thank you note. This can be done over email but it is important that you acknowledge the person having spent time with you and to follow up.