Networking Strategies

Networking represents an effective and essential strategy for a successful job and internship search and provides an opportunity to gain an insider perspective about organizations, career paths, and responsibilities. While job and internship leads can be found through a variety of search methods including employer websites and career fairs, recent studies demonstrate how important networking has become in the workplace. Individuals are more comfortable hiring someone they know and often look to social media and associates for referrals. Utilize this resource to develop and to maximize your professional network and to learn about informational interviewing.

Who is in my network?
- Family, professors, classmates, mentors, supervisors, colleagues, and previous employers
- Student and professional organizations
- Internship and volunteer experiences
- UT Dallas alumni and LinkedIn connections
- Contacts from on-campus recruiting events including career fairs, industry forums, meet and greets, employer information sessions, and university symposiums and trainings

How do I build and utilize my network?
- Identify your employers and industries of interest by reviewing the Vault guides available through the Career Management Center
- Attend on-campus recruiting events to build connections
- Utilize social media tools to manage your connections and to introduce yourself to new contacts. LinkedIn represents the KEY resource for professional networking. In addition, employers are increasingly using Facebook and Twitter to advertise jobs and internships and to research candidates.
- Develop a 30-second introduction (elevator speech) that effectively demonstrates your skills, interests, and experiences.
- Request an informational interview with your contacts about your career interests and ask questions to help you learn more about their career paths and best practices.
The Informational Interview

The informational interview represents an effective tool to learn about career fields and to build your professional network. It essentially is a practice interview where you are the interviewer. Studies demonstrate that individuals like to hire people they know and professionals also enjoy talking about their work. Therefore, the informational interview can help you explore and determine if a career field is right for you, build your confidence by gaining an insider perspective about an employer and industry, and prepare for your next job or internship interview.

Where do I begin?

- Identify and make a list of the employers you are interested in working for. Review LinkedIn, Vault, and CometCareers for examples.
- Become an informed interviewer and complete research about the employer. Know the mission, core values, products, services, and current/future projects of the organization.
- Utilize LinkedIn connections and collect business cards at on-campus recruiting events to set-up meetings.
- Prepare 5 questions to ask the individual. Examples include skills and qualities they look for in applicants, discussing the person’s career path, challenges and opportunities within the organization, daily responsibilities, and future of the industry.

Tips for Scheduling and Conducting the Interview

- Be cognizant and respectful of the person’s time. It is strongly recommended to keep your meeting request to approximately 10-15 minutes. While face-to-face meetings at the contact’s business is best, be flexible to phone, email, instant messaging, and videoconferencing (Skype) correspondence.
- Remember that this is not a job interview. Be clear that you would like to meet with the contact to learn about his/her career path and organization and not to submit a resume for a position.
- Complete thorough research to ensure you are asking appropriate questions.
- Prepare specific, thoughtful questions to demonstrate your interest and preparedness and to encourage thoughtful discussion.
- Dress and act professionally. You only have one opportunity to make a first impression.
- Send a thank you note following the interview, which communicates your appreciation for their time and interest in helping you with your career path.