

Networking

Networking is a term job and internship seekers hear a great deal, but what exactly is Networking?

Networking is not something you do that is separate from what you do everyday. Really, it isn't. If you are on Facebook, you network. If you are on LinkedIn, you network. If you have conversations with friends and family, you network. If you belong to student groups, social groups, a religious organization, etc., you network. In short, networking is simply developing and maintaining relationships with others.

In the context of career development, there are two basic forms of networking: Formal networking and informal networking.

Formal networking is what occurs when you attend events, conferences, meetings, etc. of organizations that are related to what it is you wish to do. For example, for those interested in graphic/media design, joining the professional association AIGA, and attending their meetings and events, puts you in contact with others who share your interests, some of whom can put you on the path to a potential employer.

For a list of professional associations related to careers of interest, please visit the Career Development section of the A&D web site:

http://art-design.umich.edu/career/resources#professional_associations

Some formal networking can be done on line through sources like:

LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/>

UM Alumni InCircle <http://alumni.umich.edu/networking-tools/social-networking/inCircle>

Doostang <http://www.doostang.com/>

LinkedIn has a great many subgroups that may be of interest to you and can more closely link you to those who share your interests and point toward job openings. The UM Career Center has a blog "How to Get Started on LinkedIn" which is very useful:

<http://blog.careercenter.dsa.umich.edu/2010/01/06/how-to-get-started-on-linkedin/>

Informal networking is taking advantage of any situation in which you find yourself: attending a party, being on a bus or airplane, etc. In social situations in which you are having conversations you will often talk about what the other person does and talk about yourself and what interests you. When job or internship searching, pay attention to what people are telling you. Is this person someone who can be of help? Is this person connected to someone who can be of help?

Informal networking in the context of career development is putting a different slant on what you do already. More and more people use social networking sites like Facebook to seek out and develop relationships that can lead to a job. Since 80-90% of jobs are not posted, the only way you can find out about them is through your connections. Networking (basically getting to know people) is essential even when applying for a position that is posted since you greatly increase the likelihood of being hired if the person doing the hiring knows you.

Even if the person making hiring decisions does not know you, contacting someone who knows this person (and can recommend you) vastly increases your chances.

CAUTION: Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter may be good tools, but be careful what you write, others will read it! Also, face to face networking is preferable to online networking and you need to remember the following:

- Know what kind of job you want.
- Be ready to follow up an encounter with an effective resume and cover letter.
- Be prepared to interview.
- Use your background in critiques and reviews to speak and present effectively.
- It is not what someone can do for you, it is what YOU can do for someone else.

A&D has handouts on Resume Writing, Cover Letter Writing, Interviewing, Portfolio Preparation, etc. Also, consult with faculty and the Career Development Coordinator.

Students often say things like, “I don’t know anyone.” This statement is almost always untrue to a certain extent. Ask yourself, “Do I know all my parents’ friends? Do I know all my friends’ parents’ friends? Do I know all my friends’ friends? Do I know all my cousins’ (uncle, aunt, grandparents, etc.) friends?” Until you can answer yes to these questions, you don’t know who you know, or in the context of networking, to whom you are somehow connected.

In addition, A&D alums are a very rich resource for networking and the A&D Career Development Coordinator maintains a database of alums who are willing to be in touch with you for networking, mentoring, etc. To discuss how to connect with A&D alums, please schedule an appointment by calling 734-764-0397.

When connecting to alums via email, or any other people who may be helpful, please keep the following in mind:

1. Tell them who you are.
2. Tell them how you are connected.

3. Tell them why you are getting in touch--what are your interests, how do your interests and theirs coincide, be as specific as possible. Don't ask directly for a job, but instead discuss the fact you are contacting them for networking, looking for contacts, opportunities, etc.... and do your homework on who the person is, what the company does, etc.
4. Follow up! Always send a thank you email/note even if the answer is "I can't help you."

Here is an example of an email sent to an alum for networking purposes:

Hello Ms./Mr. (alum's last name),

Our good friend John Luther recommended that I get in touch with you. My name is (your name here) and I am a (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, etc.) at the School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan. I am writing because I will be relocating to (location) after graduation and since John is always encouraging us to network, I thought it wise to take his advice.

From your website I can see that (insert pertinent information here). I know from John that you have paid your dues and I would love to learn from your experiences.

My background is primarily in (insert pertinent info here) but I too have held various positions in (contrasting and/or appropriate info here). I have worked as an intern for (pertinent employer info here), as well as (other pertinent position here). Currently, I am working as (current position here). I have enjoyed all of these experiences and am interested in finding a position in which I am able to utilize my talents.

John Luther said that I should share with you some of my skills so that you could potentially pair me up with someone that might be interested. Apart from my (insert pertinent specific skill set), I believe that communicating with people face to face is one of my strongest skills. I am an extremely hard worker and I work very well both independently and in a team setting. I love working with people and I am interested in working in a collaborative, fast-paced and progressive environment.

Would it be possible to speak with you about your experience? Avenues to tap into in (name of city, region, etc.)? Places to look? People to contact?

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your name

For more information, or to discuss other issues related to career development, contact John Luther, Career Development Coordinator, by stopping at the front desk of the Smucker Wagstaff Academic Programs Center or calling to make an appointment (734) 764-0397.