

Networking

Tips & Strategies



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CAREER CENTER

THE ART OF NETWORKING

WHAT IS NETWORKING REALLY ABOUT?

For many people, the word "networking" sounds daunting. Just the idea of it brings on anxiety! Our goal is to help you learn the art of networking as a form of relationship-building in a positive, unintimidating way. In fact, you've probably engaged in networking many times without realizing it. Like it or not, networking is consistently found to be the most effective job searching tool. Therefore, it's important to understand what networking is and how you can become confident doing it.

So, what is networking in its purest form?

[Networking](#) is about building relationships that provide opportunity to learn from others' experience, explore career options, hone interview techniques, and potentially obtain job search leads. Networking is **NOT** about asking for a job.

NETWORKING TIPS & STRATEGIES

- **Know what you're after.** It's important to have a goal in mind when networking. Brainstorm about your [primary strengths and interests](#). It's important to be clear, concise, and confident when speaking with a contact.
- **Start with your personal contacts.** Think about who is already in your network - friends, relatives, faculty, church members, internship or employment supervisors, coaches, your roommates' parents - and start there.
- **Keep a record of the people you meet.** Immediately after you make a new contact, write down their information: name, title, company, email/phone, referral sources, date of contact, and a few notes about your conversation. If they have one, a [business/networking card](#) can be very handy. Check out our "[Networking Tracker](#)" tool to help you stay organized.
- **Learn to ask for referrals.** After you know what you're interested in, ask the people around you if they know someone in that particular field. You might be surprised what you can find when others share their contacts.
- **Utilize networking resources.** Messiah College alumni are an invaluable resource. They've been in your shoes and are typically happy to share insight about their experiences. One of the most valuable tools to assist you in networking with alumni is the [Messiah College Professional Network](#) on LinkedIn.
- **Attend events that promote networking.** Examples of events include job fairs, programs that include alumni, professional conferences, young professionals' networks, and so on. Try to get connected with a professional association in your field. Read on for advice and tips on how to navigate networking events.

Don't underestimate the importance of networking while you are in college.

"The concept is to plant the seeds before you need to harvest them," says Heather Krasna, director of career services at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Affairs. "By the time you're about to graduate, it's getting to be a little late in the day to start building those connections."

- from "[Six Ways to Network While You are in College](#)", *US News & World Report* (2011)

NETWORKING ETIQUETTE

Keep the following key points in mind when embarking on your networking journey:

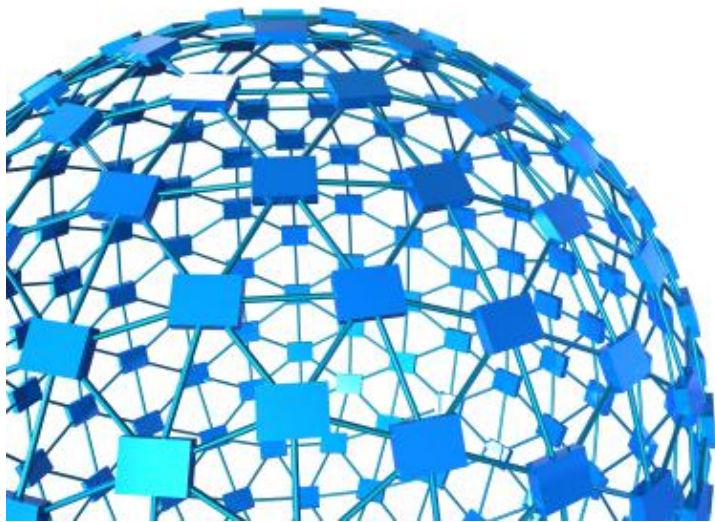
- **Avoid asking for a job.** Instead, focus on gathering information.
- **Respect their time.** When requesting a meeting or phone call with a prospective network, let them know how much time you plan to take - 20 minutes, 30 minutes?
- **Always send a thank-you note.** After a meeting or phone conversation, send a thank-you note to that person for taking time to share information with you. A professional card or email is appropriate.
- **Stay positive.** Avoid any negativity when talking about people, past experiences, or what you have to offer.
- **Be professional.** When emailing or phoning, be mindful of your tone of voice and writing skills. Avoid slang, and proof for grammatical errors.

NAVIGATING A NETWORKING EVENT

Many types of organizations conduct networking events for employees, volunteers, donors, clients, etc. These events are typically held at functions such as professional conferences, political campaigns, fundraisers, and recognition dinners. In addition to off-campus events, there are several opportunities offered through the Career Center for students to network with alumni, parents and friends of the College. The idea of attending a networking event may be overwhelming even to experienced networkers. The tips below will help you successfully navigate your next event:

- It's typically not recommended that you bring a resume to a networking reception; however it is encouraged that you create [professional networking cards](#) to hand out to any contacts you meet.
- Try to **talk to a variety of individuals** at networking events. Keep in mind that people from all stages and walks of life can provide helpful advice, so do not simply stay with your friends or converse with the same person all night. Also, don't limit yourself to only talking with people who had your same college major. Make your way around the room, trying to engage in conversation with as many people as possible, while focusing on quality dialogue.
- Extend a **firm handshake**, maintain eye contact, and smile.
- A **polished appearance** will help you make a positive first impression. Dress neatly and professionally. Do not overdue makeup, jewelry, or accessories.
- Place your **nametag** on the right. When shaking hands, this allows the eye of person you are greeting to easily follow your right arm up to your nametag.
- Hold your **food or drink** in your left hand, so that you are free to shake hands with your right hand.
- A networking event is not the place to consume large amounts of food, even if the offerings look delicious and you are extremely hungry! Do not overload your plate, and avoid spending all your time at the event eating. It's recommended that you eat a small meal ahead of time.

- If possible, **find out before the event who will be in attendance.** This will enable you to do some **research** on the people you may come in contact with and organizations they represent, so that you can intelligently enter into a discussion with them. It will also allow you to determine if there is anyone at the event whom you would particularly like to meet. Have some questions in mind – what exactly do you want to learn about their career field or organization (See [“Informational Interview”](#) handout)?



- When you're **ready to leave a discussion**, simply excuse yourself by saying something like, "Thank you for your time. I enjoyed meeting you and hope we have the chance to connect again. I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening." This is also a perfect opportunity to hand out your **professional networking card**.

NETWORKING & SOCIAL MEDIA

When utilized correctly, social media can be a fast and effective way to network. The following platforms each offer a unique way to connect professionally with others:

- I. **LINKEDIN** - The most popular, international networking resource! Utilize [LinkedIn](#) to connect professionally with others in your field of interest, join professional groups (including the [Messiah College Professional Network](#)), follow companies, and search for jobs. Find more specific tips on the [LinkedIn section](#) on the Career Center's website.

- II. **TWITTER** - In addition to connecting you with others in your field, this platform can provide you with access to a wealth of information from industry experts. Twitter also is a fantastic way to view job postings, as over one million job openings are tweeted each month (be sure to utilize [TweetMyJobs](#) to expand your search). When using Twitter, it is recommended that your "160me" be professional in nature. Your Twitter profile should include a link to your LinkedIn profile. All of your tweets should primarily be about items that related to your field of interest, and should make optimal use of hashtags and retweets. A final recommendation is to follow people on Twitter who you would like to know you, such as industry leaders or human resource representatives.
**Some helpful sites to support your Twitter use include [Listorious](#), [Twellow](#), [TweetDeck](#), and [HootSuite](#).*

- III. **FACEBOOK** -Before you begin to utilize Facebook to network professionally, be sure ALL of your postings, pictures, and updates are appropriate. Some effective ways to use Facebook when networking include: linking your blog or website to your Facebook page, reminding others of your job search status through your status updates, and/or posting a professionally-written note about your current career situation onto your profile page.



NETWORKING SAMPLES

Read below for sample questions and script to refer to as you begin networking:

I. QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN NETWORKING:

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- What was your major in college?
- What was your career/vocational journey like once you graduated from college?
- How did you prepare for entry into your profession?
- How did you locate and secure your current job?
- What specific degrees or experience is necessary for this kind of work?
- If you were to redesign your college experience, what would you do differently?

B. CURRENT ROLE INFORMATION

- What is a typical work day like for you? What are some common tasks throughout the day?
- Do you have opportunities for a varied schedule, such as telecommuting or job sharing?
- What are the interesting aspects of your job? What are some difficulties and frustrations?
- What are the most significant changes facing your field/organization?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? What is the job outlook in this field?

C. YOUR INTEREST IN THE FIELD

- What experiences would you recommend I have (coursework, internship, volunteer, study abroad, campus involvement, etc.) to prepare for a job in this field?
- What does it take (personality traits, strengths, competencies, experiences) to be successful in this field?
- What do I need to have on my resume to be considered for employment in this field?
- Can you recommend resources that offer helpful information about the field?
- What are some related occupations that I might investigate?
- What professional organizations would you recommend? Publications to read?
- What specific advice would you give a person entering the field?
- Can you provide me the names of others in this field who might talk with me and provide additional information? May I use your name?

II. SCRIPT FOR INITIAL EMAIL CONTACT:

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

I obtained your name and contact information from my academic advisor. Currently, I am a junior Psychology major at Messiah College. I am interested in learning more about the art therapy profession, your organization, and about your career path.

I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to talk with you about your experience and advice, if you are able to find 20-30 minutes in your schedule to talk with me. Thank you in advance for your time. You can reach me at 717.555.5555 or MollyS@messiah.edu.

Sincerely,
Molly Sanders

FOLLOWING UP

A key ingredient to effective networking is proper follow up. When possible, obtain a business card or jot down contact information so that you can send a thank you note or email to your new contacts. After a meeting or a phone conversation, send a thank-you (within 2 business days) to that person for taking time to share information with you. Be sure to reference any noteworthy items which you discussed. If appropriate, you can even ask for an additional meeting to further any conversation or request an informational interview. Also be sure to utilize **LinkedIn** to connect with your new contacts.

No matter what path your career journey takes after Messiah College, networking opportunities will likely be a part of your working life. By perfecting your networking skills now, you will be more equipped to succeed in the future.



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