Networking is a great strategy for securing employment. Serious job-seekers take initiative to make themselves known by others who might have job leads, contacts, or advice. Many people, however, are afraid of networking or unsure how to go about it. This handout defines networking and discusses an array of networking strategies.

Definition

- According to dictionary.com, networking means:
  - To interact or engage in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support
  - A supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest
- Key points:
  - Networking is about developing relationships
  - Successful networking results in bi-directional assistance and sharing of information
  - You can network with anyone...anywhere...for a multitude of reasons
  - Networking can be planned or serendipitous
- Networking is not:
  - Latching onto someone and sucking them dry
  - Being fake or schmoozing insincerely

Purposes

- Career exploration
  - Receive information about different sectors, career fields, employers, and job titles, as well as advice on how to break into those areas
- Job search
  - Learn about job opportunities and how your skills, experience, and education might enable you to make a difference in various organizations
- Career development
  - Maintain awareness of trends, learn about new projects and opportunities, develop new skills, and meet potential collaborators

Employer Preferences

- Data:
  - Dozens of studies show that employers’ preferred hiring method is utilizing contacts.
  - In other words, people like to hire people they know, even if the connection is nominal.
  - Statistics show that 40-80% of people get their jobs by networking.
- Sample study: According to Richard Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute*, employers look for employees using the following methods, ordered from most preferred to least preferred.
  - Inside the Company: Hiring or promoting from within
  - Colleagues: Asking colleagues about employees, past or present, where those colleagues work
  - Referrals: Asking colleagues about employees they might know of, at other workplaces
  - Drop-Ins w/ Proof: In an interview initiated by a job-hunter, asking for proof of what s/he can do
  - Contacts: Using a friend or business colleague for a direct introduction to prospective employees
  - Agencies: Using an agency – private, public, college, federal, state, or local
  - Ads: Placing an ad in a newspaper, or posting it on the Internet
  - Resumes: Reading resumes, in order to decide who to invite in, for an interview
Sample study: A survey was completed by 47 employers who had posted a graduate-level job in HuskyJobs, the UW Career Center’s online job/internship database, during autumn 2006. Below are the percentages of employers who use these methods to recruit master’s and doctoral level employees. View complete survey results at - http://careers.washington.edu/GradStudents/Beyond-Academia

- University job boards: 78.7%
- Referrals from current employees: 76.6%
- Referrals from friends, colleagues, family, etc: 61.7%
- Professional associations: 53.2%
- General job boards (monster, careerbuilder, etc): 53.2%
- Contacting specific academic departments: 51.1%
- University career fairs: 51.1%
- On-campus recruiting: 48.9%
- Niche job boards: 34.0%
- Other university events (panels, etc): 29.8%
- Staffing agencies: 21.3%

NOTE: Participants were recruited through our university job board, which likely affected the results.

Avoidance

- Networking is a proven strategy, yet many people avoid networking because they:
  - Are shy
  - Fear rejection
  - Think others won’t be interested in speaking with them
  - Believe talking about their strengths and asking others for advice is self-centered
  - Complain that networking takes too much effort
  - Don’t know with whom they should network
  - Don’t know how to network effectively

- This handout seeks to alleviate these concerns.

General Networking Tips

- Networking is a skill that anybody can learn but effective networking takes practice. Following the tips below will help you maximize networking opportunities of all shapes and sizes.

  - Getting started:
    - Keep an open mind about who might be helpful – it truly is a small world and all of us are connected with fewer degrees of separation than you might expect
    - Clarify your goals – know what you really want to get from networking opportunities – knowledge of employment sectors, career fields, employers, departments, job titles, etc
    - Know your strengths – talking about strengths allows contacts to get to know you quickly and opens you up to careers and job titles you’ve never even heard of
    - Identify potential contacts (see below) and a strategy for networking with them.
    - Develop a short personal script with 1) Name, 2) Organization, interests, and/or skills, and 3) What you want from the other person.
      - Adapt your script based on the context, goal, contact, etc.
      - Sample: “My name is XX and I am working on my XX degree at the UW. I am passionate about global health issues. I particularly enjoy conducting needs assessments by interviewing various stakeholders. I’m wondering if you can give me some ideas about what organizations, departments, or job titles might make good use of my skills.”

  - Maintaining:
    - Diversify your networking strategies – use more than one resource discussed in this handout
    - Stay organized – keep track of who you’re contacting, when, how you found them, what you discussed, your next steps, etc
    - Make your mama proud – be gracious, considerate, flexible, appreciative, etc
Express interest in others – most people love to talk about themselves and their work so expressing interest in others is a great way to build a connection
Stay positive – networking attempts will be most successful if you have (or fake well) confidence in your networking skills and in what you have to offer the world
Don’t directly ask for jobs – this puts others in an awkward, uncomfortable position

- Bringing it home:
  - Follow-up – after you initiate and create a networking relationship, be sure to check-in periodically so you can maintain and nurture the connection
  - Be persistent – if it’s not going well, re-evaluate your strategies, script, or choice of contacts
    - If a contact doesn’t respond to your call or email, try one more time

Identify Potential Networking Targets

- Level 1 – Network with people you know
  - Personal – family, friends, teammates, neighbors, church members, book club members, etc
  - Professional – current and former classmates, teachers, bosses, coworkers, coauthors, etc

- Level 2 – Network with people you know through your Level 1 contacts
  - Ask your Level 1 contacts if they can refer you to others who might have helpful information
  - See if faculty and staff in your department can refer you to alumni or employers who have hired individuals from your department

- Level 3 - Network with people you don’t know but are connected to in some way – graduated from the same college, member of the same organization, etc
  - Use the Husky Career Network
    - It’s a searchable worldwide network of nearly 300 UW alumni volunteers offering networking referrals and information about their field and geographical area.
    - The network is sponsored by the UW Alumni Association.
    - Access is free for UW students.
    - http://www.washington.edu/alumni/careers/hcn/
  - Ask your alma maters if they have alumni boards similar to Husky Career Network.
  - Find 30,000 Huskies in the “University of Washington Alumni Group” in LinkedIn

- Level 4 – Connect with people you don’t know or only know through colleagues’ colleagues
  - Talk with people at airports, grocery stores, weddings, coffee shops, etc
  - Use the phonebook, Internet, or employer directories to find people to “cold call”

Spread the Word

- It may seem basic, but as soon as you know you will be on the job market, get the word out!
- Tell your Level 1 contacts what skills you have and how you are hoping to use them in a job setting.
- Say something like: “As you know, I’ve been in school the past few years. I will be completing my PhD in XX in about 6 months. I am looking for a full-time job I can start after graduation. I would like to utilize my skills in analysis, writing, and persuasion in a non-profit or educational setting. I am open to various employers and job titles. Please keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities that might match my skill set. I would also appreciate referrals to others who might have information about interesting job possibilities. Thank you for your time and support.”
- Holiday cards are a good way to touch base with loved ones.
Join Organizations & Committees

- Organizations, committees, clubs and other groups provide a wonderful opportunity for you to meet other professionals in your field who might have job openings, know of job openings or referrals, or provide support for your job search process.
- Look for contacts in the member directory.
- Attend meetings and talks.
  - After a presentation, you could approach the speaker and say something like:
    - “Hello. My name is XX and I work on XX research in XX department at the UW. I found your talk really interesting. Thank you for taking the time to participate today. I’m exploring my career options and would like to ask you a couple of questions about your work. Would you have a few minutes to chat with me, either now or at a later date? [Wait] Great! [Ask questions, if given permission] May I have one of your business cards? Thank you so much for your time! I appreciate your assistance.”
  - To network with other attendees, you can make small talk by asking what sessions others have found helpful, how long they have been members of the organization, where they work, etc.
- Attend social hours, happy hours, and other “informal” events.
  - Attend or download materials from our Working the Room workshop – http://careers.washington.edu/gradstudents/strategiesforsuccess
- Here are some resources to help you locate organizations at the campus, city, and national level:
  - Campus committees - http://depts.washington.edu/gpss/university-representation/committee-appointments
  - Campus student groups - http://depts.washington.edu/sao/rso-directory/
  - Seattle organizations - http://www.iloveseattle.org/
  - National associations - http://www.scholarly-societies.org/

Attend Campus Panels & Events

- The Career Center and other campus groups frequently invite alumni and employer representatives to talk to students about careers.
  - Examples include networking socials, alumni panels, employer panels, employer information sessions, etiquette dinners, career fairs, guest speakers, colloquia, etc.
  - These events provide an easy, safe way for students to develop relationships with contacts who are specifically interested in helping students explore careers or find jobs.
- Adapt the script provided in the previous section if you want to network with presenters.
- Campus event information:
  - Grad student career events - http://careers.washington.edu/Calendar
  - General career events - http://careers.washington.edu/Calendar
  - Events sponsored by the Graduate School - http://www.grad.washington.edu/

Use Professional Networking Sites

- Consider joining one or more professional networking sites such as LinkedIn.
- Sample uses include, but are definitely not limited to:
  - Seeing who your contacts know and connecting with them
  - Finding people with whom you have a commonality – such as the same alma mater
  - Searching for the place at which you dream of working and seeing how the employees got there
  - Joining groups such as the “University of Washington Alumni Group”
  - Applying for jobs in the LinkedIn jobs board
Access resources about using LinkedIn effectively at –
- http://university.linkedin.com/career-services/resources#handouts
- http://careers.washington.edu/

Be cautious about content you put on social networking sites such as Facebook because employers often use the sites to conduct research on job applicants.

Conduct Informational Interviews

Goals of informational interviews:
- To gain information about a career, industry, company, or job of interest to you by asking questions of somebody currently working in the field
- To obtain ideas about how your skills and experiences might be useful in the world of work
- To develop relationships - people generally love to talk about themselves and give advice so many individuals enjoy being asked to participate in informational interviews
- To get referrals to others who might know of interesting career opportunities for you
- Informational interviews are NOT job interviews - do not ask interviewees for jobs!

Before an informational interview:
- Clarify your goals, identify contacts, and write your script as described on page 3.
- Research the field / job / employer so you seem prepared and knowledgeable.
- Prepare questions for the interview based on your knowledge of the field.
- Request a 15-30 minute in-person interview (by mail, email, or phone). See below for sample.
  - Indicate flexibility regarding date, time, and location for the meeting.
  - Offer to meet your contact at or near his/her workplace.
  - Make it clear that you are exploring career paths...NOT asking for jobs.

Sample informational interview request:
- “Hello. My name is XX and I am a grad student in XX at the UW. I met Mr. XX recently at XX. He recommended that I speak with you because he thought you might have some valuable advice for me. I am exploring a few different career paths and I am really interested in learning more about the work you do in XXX at XXX. I think the field of XX might be a good fit for my strengths and interests in X, Y, & Z but I would like to get your personal perspective on the field and ask for advice on how to prepare myself for the field. I know you are very busy but I would appreciate the opportunity to visit with you for 15 minutes at a time and place that is convenient for you. Thanks for considering my request. Have a great day. Sincerely, XX.”

During an informational interview:
- Dress in a business-like manner.
- Be on time and be mindful of the time throughout the interview.
- Express appreciation for the interviewee’s time.
- Introduce yourself.
- State your purpose for conducting the interview.
- Build rapport by asking open-ended questions.
- Describe your background and strengths (have resume or CV on hand).
- Ask about career preparation needed for field / job / employer.
- Ask for referrals to other potentially helpful contacts.
- Express appreciation for the interviewee’s time and insights.
- Take notes, if doing so doesn’t detract from rapport-building.
- Always offer to pay if meeting over meals or beverages.

Appropriate questions for informational interviews include:
- What attracted you to this field?
- What do you most like about this position or field?
What do you least like about this position or field?
Describe a typical day or week.
How typical is your job compared to other jobs in the industry?
What steps did you take to break into this field?
What skills and attributes are most helpful in your job?
What are typical career paths and salary levels in your field?
To what professional associations do you belong?
What are some related jobs or fields?
How do you think my skill set would best fit in your field?
What advice would you give somebody interested in pursuing your line of work?
Who else might be able to share their experience of this field with me?

After an informational interview:
Summarize your notes from the interview and decide your next steps.
Keep track of all correspondence using a spreadsheet, database, etc.
Write a thank-you note immediately.
If you successfully use the suggestions your contact mentioned, follow-up on his/her referrals, or obtain a job, send another thank-you note.
If you find a resource you think would be of interest to your contact, send it so you can continue to develop the relationship.

Resources

University of Washington, Career Center