



Networking

Networking is widely regarded as one of the most effective means of accessing careers information and finding a job. It allows you to better understand the industry you want to work in, to become known in those industries, and to connect with people who may refer you or hire you. Even though job search networking is important, it can often feel intimidating. However, it can be as simple as engaging in conversation with someone on a bus who happens to be in the industry you are interested in. They may refer you to a colleague who hires you. You may be offered a job simply because a friend or acquaintance knows your background and skills.

GETTING STARTED

- Make it a goal to identify and connect with people in your preferred area of interest
- Be selective in the people and organisations that you target, and research the organisations you are interested in. Research the roles too – see the jobs database section of the Careers NZ website: www.careers.govt.nz
- Conduct informational interviews with your contacts and ask for referrals – Massey’s Career and Employment Service offers a separate handout on this topic
- Start with your existing network of contacts – fellow students, lecturers, tutors, family, friends, colleagues, sports team mates and others
- Develop a spreadsheet of Job Contacts, and record all the necessary information that you gained when networking, i.e. names, position titles, organisations, contact info, and other info such as what you talked about when you met with that person, and any ideas they suggested. You may be surprised the people your friends know. Keep the information up to date.
- Perhaps assign yourself a quota of contacts to be made each day. The more often you do this the easier it will become. It could also be email or social media contact too.

FACE TO FACE

In the electronically-connected world in which we live, it is easy to think that an e-mail, a tweet, or a text will work as well as a face-to-face conversation with someone. It’s unlikely that sending e-mails or texts will not replace face-to-face interaction. Both online and offline networking can be useful, but face-to-face networking ideally occurs early in the relationship. The power of personally connecting and human interaction accelerates relationship building.

- Focus on making a connection. Introduce yourself. Show your initiative and start the process
- Listen to people, engage them in conversation, use the advantages of face-to-face networking (i.e. body language, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.). If you leave an event making one or two new friends, you’ve succeeded in face-to-face networking
- Ask pertinent questions that you’ve already prepared in advance



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- Even in social situations it is OK to mention casually that you are looking for employment
- Accept every invitation you can, because who can tell where they lead?

THE ELEVATOR PITCH:

Networking can often happen in a short space of time, so ideally you will have an 'elevator pitch'. This involves introducing yourself and conveying other significant information about what you can offer an employer – all inside 30 seconds!

It's a bit like a brief verbal CV that only takes a few seconds of someone else's time. Given your interaction could take place by chance you will need to have your elevator pitch ready to go. A well thought out and well-articulated pitch can be compelling, and doesn't sound like you are reading from a script. Here are a few ideas:

- Know what you want. It makes the conversation easier and quicker for both of you
- Be comfortable asking for help – most people will help if they can, providing you do not take advantage of their time, networks or generosity.
- Use some quick examples to show you are qualified for the type of position you are seeking, but don't verbalize your whole CV.
- Try to convey the value you can add, or what you can give to an employer.
- Put your best foot forward and be positive, no matter how hard that may be to do.
- Smile! If you look happy and confident you will create a good impression.

JOB SEARCH NETWORKING TIPS

- Follow through with referrals, and always thank the referring contacts in writing (email is fine)
- Keep your CV up to date and accessible, in order to forward it after a chance encounter
- Produce a business card, including your name, email, and phone number. Perhaps use the back to summarise what you offer an employer in terms of skills, qualities and experience
- When you collect someone else's business card, write a note on the back so you'll remember the details of what you talked about, and further action you need, or promised, to take.
- Memorize a few of your strengths and strong points - you'll need to articulate these both verbally and in written form via your CV, as well as emphasize them during interviews.



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QUESTIONS WORTH ASKING

- How would you describe the state of the industry you work in right now?
- What's the prevailing culture in your organisation?
- What was the path that you took to get into this role?
- What are the most (and least) satisfying things about the job?
- What do employers look for when they are recruiting into these types of roles?
- If you were in my position, who else would you talk to? In this way you will acquire another referral for your Job Contacts. Check whether you can mention their name.

WHAT **NOT** TO DO

- Don't ask if you can have a job. Your task is to engage with the person and gain information
- Don't ask personal questions, such as how much they earn
- Don't highlight your own weaknesses - this is your chance to make a positive impression
- Don't be vague. Try to give the person some idea of your skills and your strengths
- Don't send out unsolicited CV's to people you've had no contact with previously. Whether by email or by post, it is too easy for the recipient to ignore it if they haven't spoken to you already. Better to make contact first, perhaps for an informational interview then be selective.

NETWORKING EVENTS

You may be invited to a networking event as part of a selection process. It may not be a formal part of selection – but may be offered to students interested in applying. All the above information applies to this scenario too. In this instance, we suggest that you:

- Treat this opportunity like an interview and prepare accordingly. Refer to the separate handout on interview preparation
- Find out who is going to be at the function if you can, so you know who you can expect to meet
- Take the initiative – go up to people and introduce yourself - use your elevator pitch or start with some 'small talk'
- Shake hands and make eye contact with a person when first meeting him/her. It is also appropriate to shake hands when leaving. Ask for a business card and offer yours
- Thank the person for their advice and time.

For further information on networking, please refer to the Career and Employment Service:
<http://careers.massey.ac.nz>