

Networking

A HILSDALE COLLEGE CAREER SERVICES GUIDE

How do I start?

1. Get good at small talk. Most networking begins through casual everyday conversation. Strike up a conversation with the people you meet in your normal routine. You never know who may have an aunt or a brother or a colleague in your field.

2. Approach conversations with a humble, interested attitude.

Networking conversations can go bad quickly if the person can tell you are more interested in gathering contact names than in learning from the experience of the person to whom you are speaking. Be respectful and remember that you have much to learn from each person you meet. Thank everyone.

3. Use the resources provided at Hillsdale. The Career Services Office helps students network through the following:

- Individual office appointments matching students to alumni for networking conversations
- On-campus networking events with professionals
- Networking events held in cities of interest
- “Career Conversation” events
- Career Services company presentations

Log on to Handshake to schedule a networking appointment with Career Services.

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How to Structure a Networking Conversation

- First impressions are key. Introduce yourself and establish rapport.
- Ask questions to learn about the person you are meeting.
- Create a connection between the two of you (“It sounds like we have a lot of the same ideas about our field of interest.”).
- Wrap up the conversation with a promise to keep in touch and then do so by following up.

PURPOSE

Developing Relationships

“I like to define networking as cultivating mutually beneficial, give-and-take, win-win relationships... The end result may be to develop a large and diverse group of people who will gladly and continually refer a lot of business to us, while we do the same for them.”

—Bob Burg

The Importance of Follow-Up

The number one rule of networking is to stay in touch!

- Write a brief thank-you note to those you meet.
- Follow up when you say you will.
- Send a revised resume.

- Send a note to thank them for a referral you have contacted.
- Schedule another one-on-one conversation.
- Keep track of your correspondence with each person in your network, including dates and details of

voicemail messages and telephone conversations, questions and answers from information interviews, notes from office visits, and dates you have agreed to follow up, etc.

The Next Step

Networking is a continual lifelong process. When you are networking, always ask for the next step in gaining information about your field.

- Ask for an informational interview (see *Interviews*).

- After an information interview, ask whether you can visit an individual's office or job shadow someone in his or her organization.
- When visiting an office, offer to voluntarily help out with a project or need his or her office may have,

or ask if he or she might consider hosting you as an intern.

- While serving in an internship, inquire about potential full-time job opportunities and display an interest and passion in working for the organization.

NETWORKING EVENTS

- When attending a networking or other professional event, you will meet lots of people in a very short time and will want to remember some information about them. Wear something with pockets so you have a place to stow business cards. Come prepared to jot notes in a small notebook or smartphone. Consider creating and bringing your own business cards.

- Most networking events involve food, drink, and lots of handshakes. Consider balancing a notebook under your plate or keeping your smartphone in a pocket. Don't carry both a drink and a plate at the same time. You will need at least one hand free at all times in order to shake hands with people you meet.
- Your dress should be professional, sharp, and modest.

Sample Networking Questions

Professional Journey

- Would you describe your current role and your professional journey?
- What advice would you have for me as I consider entering this field?

State of the Industry

- Is this field growing?
- What developments, new technology, etc., could affect future opportunities?
- Why do people leave this field?
- Who are the most important people in the industry today?
- How does your company compare to others in the same industry?

What Work is Like

- What skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
- What parts of your job do you find most challenging?
- What do you find most enjoyable?
- Which seasons of the year are busiest in your job?
- Does the work involve frequent travel or late nights?

Money and Advancement

- What do you think is the earning potential for this field?
- How, and how often, are people in this field promoted?
- What is the background of the most senior-level executives?