

# Networking:

## Making Connections for Your Future

*Networking is all about building professional relationships*

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Think of networking as a way to connect with others. It's not transactional, it's relational. Networking is learning from people, gaining their advice and guidance. You're not asking for a favor, but to learn from their experience and wisdom. This happens everyday with your fellow students, professors and coworkers.

### NETWORKING OVERVIEW

Your network starts with who you know. Think of the contacts you have through family, friends, professors, past employers, or roommates and begin to expand your network by asking them about people they know in certain careers. You will find most people very willing to share their 'stories' with you – after all, they were once where you are now, and they know the challenge of finding a meaningful path in life. **70- 80% of all jobs are found through NETWORKING.**

### NETWORKING AT EVENTS

#### Arrive Early

Savvy networkers arrive early, have their business cards or résumés readily available, and can relax and focus on learning about the other people in the room. As an early, strategic networker, you can pause to calmly gather your thoughts and your intentions so that your time spent networking will be of benefit to you and your goals. Preparation goes a long way in making you appear to be someone that other people will want to get to know. Your preparation should include your "elevator pitch", a one-minute introduction of yourself and your goals.

#### Have a Plan

The best networkers always have an idea of what the goal is for each event they attend. Know, before going in, the intended outcome that you want for yourself or for the people you meet at each event. Do you want to meet three people and focus on getting to know them really well? Are you looking to learn about a certain career field or meet a recruiter at your dream company? Identify what type of work motivates you. Having a genuine interest in a particular field will help you communicate your passion to individuals in that field. Meet with a Career Educator in the Office of Career Education to explore your specific interests and professional goals.

Prior to attending a networking event, review the organizations' Handshake profiles and/or websites. If you conduct a little research before the event, you will feel better prepared to discuss the organization with employers and will impress them with your knowledge and understanding of their values.

#### Be a Giver and/or a Connector

When you focus on "giving" and being helpful to others, the "getting" will come later ... and it will come in unexpected ways. Foremost to remember, is that no one likes a person with a "taker" mentality. When you are generous, people will notice and respect you for your kind nature. Be a giver by connecting and introducing people. This can be a simple act of introducing two people to each other.

#### Prepare Your Pitch

Put on a happy face at the door and remind yourself that it is "show time". This is your time to sparkle and shine. People will look forward to seeing you and meeting you if you are energetic, positive, and outgoing. Prepare your **elevator pitch**, a brief and persuasive introduction that allows you to "sell yourself" to an employer in 15-20 seconds. A

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good elevator pitch focuses on your work/internship experience, background skills, accomplishments and goals. Try to touch on “the past”, “the present” and “the future.” Practicing your pitch out loud before the event allows you to smoothly answer the question “Tell me about yourself.”

### **Listen with Focus**

When someone is speaking with you, give that person your entire focus. Listen! Really hear what the person is saying. Keep your eyes and ears focused and keep your self-talk and thoughts focused too. The greatest gift that you can give to another person is to truly hear what that person is saying.

### **Be Genuine**

Everyone knows when someone isn't being sincere with them. Be genuine in your interactions with others at an event. Again, it comes back to building trust, to building "brand YOU". When you are interested in learning about someone and their business entirely for the sake of learning about the other person, you will leave a lasting impression as someone who genuinely cares.

### **Follow Up**

After the event, connect on LinkedIn with those you met. Mention something from your discussion in the thank you card (it helps if you jot notes on the back of each person's business card that you collect). If there is a referral that you can supply to someone you've just met, include that in the follow up note. Showing up and following up are the two most important parts of networking. Showing up, in most cases, is the easy part. The follow up is, sadly, the most neglected part of networking.

### **Network Safely**

It's important to take precautions when networking with individuals, *including friends of friends and Arcadia alumni*, as well as conducting interviews with employers and alumni. These are general tips but each situation is unique; the main thing to remember is to trust your instincts and if you feel uncomfortable, either express this or find an excuse to leave. Never feel obligated to reciprocate for the networking help you have received – this is a professional contact, not quid pro quo. It's never appropriate for your networking contact to exact a personal or social obligation from you.

## **ONLINE/EMAIL/PHONE PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING**

**Making Contact for an Informational Interview:** Getting to know people in your field of interest is vital as you search for meaningful internships and plan your full time job search. A great place to start look for connections is LinkedIn. The “Alumni Finder” on LinkedIn can be found at <https://www.linkedin.com/edu/alumni> You can also join Arcadia groups on LinkedIn, some are career specific. Check out the Arcadia University Alumni group as a starting point. Think of the members of your network as your professional development guides. The better informed they are about you and what you want to do the better they can answer your questions or lead you to opportunities. Identify information you would like to gather from your contact; have an outline of the questions you would like to ask; develop a brief summary of who you are and what your preliminary plans are. Also, thoroughly research the person you plan to contact. Does he/she have a blog? Follow it. Has she/he recently published a book or research? Read it. Prepare your résumé and draft an e-mail to introduce yourself. Discuss your résumé and networking e-mail with a Career Educator or Career Peer Advisor in the Office of Career Education.

**Remember, in networking, you are not asking for a job, but developing an invaluable resource in your career development. Networking is about building relationships.** Though networking often happens through casual conversation, you may want to set up meetings with your contacts so that you can make sure to have your time together focus on deeper conversation. This way they'll learn of your goals and give thoughtful responses to your inquiry and you'll be able to learn as much as possible about their work.

If you don't know the person with whom you are meeting, the appropriate way to make an introduction is through an e-mail message to his/her work address. Send a copy of your résumé with your inquiry to give the person more information about your experience and interests.

### Sample Introductions

Dear Ms. Jones:

*I am currently a junior at Arcadia University majoring in Business Administration. I was connected to you through Arcadia's Office of Career Education when exploring a career in consulting. Over the summer, I spent some time researching consulting careers on Vault.com. The experience got me really interested in the field and I hope to learn and explore more about a career in consulting. I hope that, with your experience at Accenture, you can provide me with your insights and perspectives on your career experience. Would you be able to chat for 15 minutes? We can talk by phone or via email, whichever method is more convenient for you.*

*Thank you so much for kind help and I hope you have a great week ahead!*

*Yours sincerely,  
Kenny Knight*

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Dear Dr. Young,

*I hope you are well. I'm an Arcadia University student from the class of 20XX who was connected to you through the Arcadia alumni LinkedIn group. I know you are an active alumna and I'm excited to have the chance to get in touch with you because of your extensive knowledge and expertise in the environmental field through your work at the Environmental Agency.*

*I have spent the past year building experiences related to science and helping the environment. My résumé is attached, if you are interested in finding out a bit more about who I am and about the other environmental work I have conducted.*

*I was extremely interested to read the Sustainable Water Systems Report that was published by the Aspen Institute this June, and was heartened by many of the recommendations included in it. If you have a chance in the coming days, I am eager to learn a bit about the projects in which you are involved as a senior fellow.*

*Please let me know if you're able to find time for a conversation; I would be very grateful for about 15 minutes of your time.*

*Thank you so much,  
Hilary Heinz*

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Hello Mr. Smith,

*I'm an Arcadia University student planning to major in biology. I learned from LinkedIn that you are a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania and I've found reading your work on your website very interesting. This summer I hope to get some experience in genetic research and wonder if you could give me some guidance about the types of opportunities that would be most meaningful to pursue. I've attached my résumé to give you an idea of the course work I've completed. Is there a time convenient for you when we could set up a 20-minute conversation to talk about my interest in gaining experience in genetic research? Thank you in advance for any advice you might have.*

*Sincerely,  
Dana Dilworth*

If you intend to make initial contact via LinkedIn, be sure to personalize the message as opposed to using the default message. For example: I'd like to connect on LinkedIn because I see that you were a biology major at Arcadia who earned a DPT degree. I am also a biology major at Arcadia University and am considering graduate school for physical therapy. Could I ask you a few questions about your career path via email or might you have 15 minutes or so to chat on the phone?

Follow the e-mail message with a phone call to confirm a time to talk or meet in person. Don't assume when you call initially that your contact will be ready for an interview at that time – schedule a 20-30minute appointment. Be friendly. Everyone has busy schedules. Expect to exchange numerous telephone calls before you make contact. However, if the current time is convenient for the contact, ask the questions you have prepared.

### **Prepare for Meetings/Phone Interviews**

Before making contact, learn what you can about the contact/alum and her/his place of work.

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#### **Develop a list of questions and try to ask open-ended ones that will generate discussion:**

- What is your educational background? What were your career plans when you graduated?
- What credentials (degrees, certificates, licenses, etc.) are required for entry into the field?
- How did you prepare yourself for this work?
- Describe your typical work day/week.
- What skills are most essential for effectiveness in this job?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with? What do you find most rewarding?
- If you were ever to leave this type of work, what would drive you away from it?
- What skills have you developed that would be transferable to a different career area?
- Is your career field growing? What do you think the future holds for this field?
- What type of experience would you recommend for undergraduates interested in this field?
- If you had to do it all again, what would you do differently?
- What qualifications do you think are important in hiring entry-level candidates in this field?
- How do job seekers find out about openings in this field?
- Based on our conversation, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
- Could you tell me a few people who might be willing to speak with me and may I use your name as an introduction? (Be prepared for an offer to introduce you on LinkedIn)

### **Maintaining Contact & Following-up**

Always send a thank you letter via email promptly after the informational interview even if this is a person you already know – professional etiquette is essential and your contact's time is valuable so let them know how much you appreciate their willingness to help you. Also follow through on suggestions and advice they give you. For example, if they recommend you look into a certain organization, do it and then let them know the outcome. This will show them you take their advice seriously and that may make them interested in continuing to mentor you when applicable.

Each person with whom you meet could be a good contact for you in the future; be sure to keep their names and contact information. Continue a reciprocal relationship. For example, if you learn in a class about a topic the contact mentioned, write a short email telling him/her about it.

As mentioned, networking is not asking for a job, but building a relationship which will benefit both people. Once a person gets to know another person (you), they will see your skills and qualifications. If/when they learn of opportunities, they'll be likely to inform you of the position and recommend you for it. They benefit by knowing they've helped a fellow Knight and also perhaps by adding a Knight to their work team. People also appreciate the chance to reflect on their career and trends in their field. Your genuine interest in their career will be valued by them. Consider the people in your network as your mentors. They will remember their challenges and success and be able to advise

you. Alumni can share with you how they translated their liberal arts education into transferable skills sought by employers. It all takes time and patience, but it'll be worth it!

### **Keep Your Network Alive**

As you accept a position or make key career decisions, share your progress with your contacts. Send to each person in your network regular e-mails (at least once a semester) to keep them informed about your progress. Avoid mass emails, however. Your network will always be interested in you and your success! After an initial contact or externship with an alumnus/a, maintaining the contact can be helpful in finding out more about careers and or employment. You can keep the connection alive by:

- Asking about significant advances in their field when new discoveries are published
- Following his/her research, publications, career advances, etc. and congratulating him/her
- Telling the contact about major events in your life
- Keeping the contact up-to-date on courses you are taking and why you like them
- Letting the contact know when you get into graduate school or get a job/internship
- Sharing your graduate school research
- Touching base when you are visiting or planning to move to the contact's area
- Asking for advice on a career decision, job offers or salary negotiations

### **Thank Your Network**

The importance of a "thank you" email or note cannot be underestimated! Alumni and other contacts are generally very willing to share their experiences and help others entering their field. Remember, though, that their time is valuable and they would like to know that is wasn't wasted.

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#### **Sample Thank You Emails**

*Dear Dr. Martinez:*

*Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I was very interested to learn more about your career in marketing. I am even more determined to pursue my goals having talked with you about my hopes to study abroad and do an internship in London. I will contact the people you suggested and follow up with you regarding my progress. I truly appreciate your insight and guidance.*

*Sincerely,  
Tanisha Taylor*

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#### **Sample Follow Up**

*Dear Professor Malik:*

*I am currently preparing to be a Peace Corps volunteer this coming summer. I completed my degree in Political Science at Arcadia University and will be able to intern at a policy think tank in Washington, DC before working abroad. Your guidance and long term planning ideas have truly helped me to get to this step. I will be sending e-mails from my post abroad and look forward to continued contact as we discuss politics and international development.*

*Thank you,  
Bilal Brubaker*