

Networking: Connections Made Easy

Why?

According to a recent survey by Manpower Group that analyzed data from 60,000 clients, networking was the single most effective way to land a job (nearly as effective as all other job search methods *combined!*). Who you know may not get you the job, but it might get your resume in the right hands, your credentials a second look, or get you pointed in the right direction. Real and effective networking is simply being genuinely interested in others and building and maintaining relationships over time. People like to meet those with similar interests and help others if it's easy for them to do so. Networking is not about asking everyone you know for a job, but can simply be asking for general job search advice, information, tips and referrals.

Who?

Faculty: They can connect you to their former students, as well as to those in their networks (who often approach faculty directly when hiring fresh talent). Talk to your advisor, volunteer in a lab, stop in during office hours. Get to know faculty, show interest, and keep in touch after you graduate, too.

Alumni: Contact alumni relations at alumni@Towson.edu.

Associations: Every field has at least one professional association, most with state or local chapters. Typically, you can join at a reduced student rate and have access to job/internship postings, mentoring programs, career information, and, of course, networking opportunities such as events and conferences. Volunteering on committees or at events is the easiest way to get to know future colleagues and established experts in your field.

Family and Friends: Does your Uncle or Aunt work in your field? Fantastic! Start building your network there. Don't know anyone in your field? Think again. Don't forget, your network includes your roommate's uncle, too. The people you know can connect you to everyone they know. And you can network anywhere and with anyone (i.e., the customer in front of you at the grocery store may work at your dream company).

How?

Online: Give LinkedIn a try (view the student orientation videos at <http://learn.linkedin.com/students/step-1/>).

Phone: Schedule a phone conversation following an in-person or email introduction.

In person: Network at student club meetings, while you're volunteering at a professional association meeting or community event, job fairs, alumni events and career panels, conferences, etc. Still nervous? Start conversations with one person at a time; pay a sincere compliment and ask questions; extend your hand with a smile and an introduction; it always will be reciprocated.

Email: Send an introductory email to someone you've been referred to, found via a professional association, read an article/blog post, or identified via the Career Mentor Database.

Give and Take

People like to help, so feel free to ask for it. Just be polite and make it easy for them to do so. Think about how you can be a resource to them, too (this is how you forge long-term relationships). Forward along an interesting article you read. Who could you introduce your contacts to? Build rapport, follow up, then ask if it's okay to keep in touch (and do so!). Always send a thank-you note.

Self-Marketing

Providing a short synopsis of your skills, experiences and strengths makes introducing yourself to someone so much easier and effective. Keep it short and practice! Focus on: **who you are, your key strengths, what sets you apart, and what you're looking for.**

This approach will generate questions/conversation. Next steps can include getting a business card, asking if you can set up a quick follow-up meeting or phone call at the person's convenience, and requesting a referral ("Would you happen to know of anyone who would be interested in talking with me?").