

# NETWORKING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

One of the most effective job search strategies is networking. Networking is essentially utilizing and building relationships to expand upon career and social opportunities. As many of you have heard before, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." Networking can be overwhelming and intimidating, but if you stay positive and confident you will be surprised by who you will connect with. You can start by talking with people about your skills, interests, and career goals. When thinking about networking remember these main points:

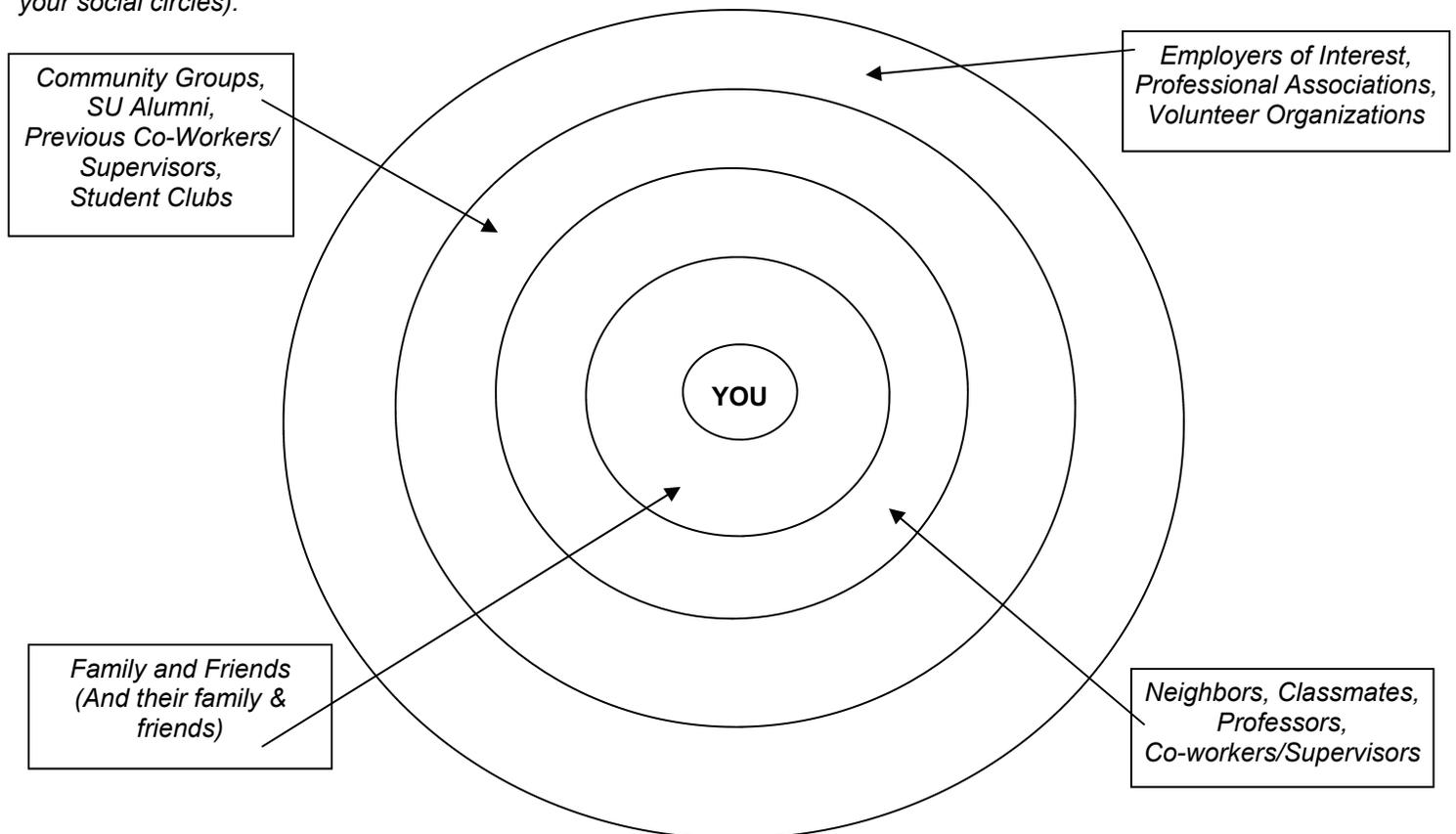
- Networking is all about relationship building.
- Meaningful conversation is key to getting to know someone and learning about their career.
- It's important to show genuine interest in "the other" or the person with whom you are talking.
- Let curiosity lead your conversation— these interactions are not about asking for favors or a job up front.
- The best networking relationships are those that have relational equity which means they are mutually beneficial.

## WHY NETWORK?

Statistics show that 70% of jobs are obtained through networking. Networking can be a great way to learn from those who have gone before you. It's important to remember that professionals were once students too and they can provide you with information on how to navigate your own job search. Individuals in your network can also provide you with valuable insight into your field, helping you stay attuned to the marketplace you hope to be a part of.

## WHO IS IN YOUR NETWORK?

The first step to building your network is to identify contacts you already have in social circles, such as co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family. Your current network is probably bigger than you realize. Also, SU alumni are great contacts to begin connecting with since you already have SU in common! (*See the exercise below to begin brainstorming who is in your social circles*).



## DIFFERENT TYPES OF NETWORKING

Networking happens in all different ways and environments. Below are some of the more common ways to engage in networking.

- Informational Interviews
- Career Fairs
- Online Networking– LinkedIn
- Social Events
- Professional Associations
- Casual Conversations

## PREPARE YOUR INTRODUCTION/ELEVATOR PITCH

Whether at a formal networking reception or meeting someone for coffee, it can be helpful to have a 30-second introduction prepared to convey your skills, background, and goals/objectives. This statement might include :

- Major, class year
- Type of opportunity you are seeking or what you are wanting to learn more about
- 2-3 strengths/selling points (what makes you unique)
- 1-2 relevant experiences you want to highlight
- A question to ask to engage the listener in conversation

Examples:

*“Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m a senior at Seattle University planning to graduate in June with a major in Marketing. I am exploring the fields of creative marketing and PR. I recently had a marketing internship at a digital marketing firm which allowed me to build my skills in creative design and marketing research. What qualities/strengths are you looking for in your organization. What tips can you offer me as a young professional entering the field?”*

*“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I will be finishing up my MBA at Seattle University in (month and year). In addition to my MBA Coursework, I have (number of) years of work experience in the (type of) industry. I recently supported a project that reduced wasted materials and decreased costs by over \$50,000. I am interested in exploring opportunities in production, where I can draw on my work experience as well as my MBA. Can you share with me more about (name of company), your role, and opportunities in the production industry at your company?”*

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING

- **Have a relationship building mindset**

Transactional networking is out; relationship-focused networking is in! It’s critical to move from a “what’s in it for me” approach to a relationship building mindset. Those who have a willingness to be curious and help others accomplish their goals are the ones to succeed.

- **Don’t limit who you network with**

Keep an open mind during this process. If you only limit yourself to meeting recruiters at the “big fish” or individuals at your target companies, you could miss out on the opportunity to build your network. Cast a wider net and be open to the possibility of meeting someone in a new industry or desired company. You may be surprised by the useful insights you can gain!

- **Nurture and maintain your network**

Don’t think of networking as a short-term action; try to connect in person, however over the phone and through email are ways to connect as well. Find ways to continue the conversation and hold yourself accountable for keeping your network engaged and sustaining momentum. Most importantly, don’t forget to show appreciation with a thank you card or email after any conversation or meeting.

- **Have an online presence**

One of the most valuable tools for networking is LinkedIn. Creating an online presence can open you up to new contacts and opportunities. This also shows employers and professionals that you are serious about nurturing your relationships. The Albers Placement Center can help you set-up your LinkedIn profile and provide useful tips on how to maximize the online networking site.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews involve talking with people who are currently working in your field of interest in order to gain a better understanding of an occupation or industry. This is a great way to build relationships with those in the field as well. Through this meeting you will gather “insider” information to be able to make more informed decisions about your career goals.

### STEP 1: Identify people to interview

- Review your social circle chart. Contact these people if they are in your field of interest or if you think they might know someone who is in your area of interest.
- The Albers Placement Center is happy to help you utilize networking tools to help you identify and best connect with companies and employers you are most interested in.

### STEP 4: Conduct the Informational Interview

- Be prepared and genuinely interested.
- Be mindful of the interviewee’s schedule and plan to stay only 20-30 minutes unless the interviewee suggests otherwise.
- Be an active listener and don’t be strict on getting all your questions asked. Go with the flow of the conversation.
- At the end of the interview, ask if you can follow-up with them in the future if you have any questions.

### STEP 2: Initiate Contact

- Tell them about yourself and why you are contacting them.
- Explain that you want to learn more about their position and would appreciate the chance to meet with them or talk over the phone for about 20 to 30 minutes.
- Clarify that you are seeking information-**not asking for a job**. On the back of this guide we provide an example of an introduction email.

### 5. Follow Up

- After the interview, be sure to send a thank you note or email to whomever you met with.
- Connect with the person you met with on LinkedIn.
- Nurture and respect the contacts that you make throughout this process because they are helping you build your professional network. When you get a job, you might want to contact them and thank them again for their advice and support in your job search process. Invite them to call upon you if they need anything as well.

### STEP 3: Prepare for the Informational Interview

- Do your research! Before your interview read about the job or occupation of the individual you are interviewing, as well as the organization of which they are a part. LinkedIn can be a great resource for this step!
- Prepare questions to ask. On the back of this guide we provide examples of informational interview questions.
- Prepare stories about yourself that you can share in your meeting.

*Remember that people love to talk about who they are and what they do. Most individuals will be flattered to speak with you about your career interests and their professional history!*

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUEST EMAIL EXAMPLE

To: manderson@financecompany.com  
Subject: Informational Interview Request

*Dear Ms. Anderson,*

*My name is Anita Job and I'm currently a Finance major in the Albers School of Business at Seattle University. I spoke with John Doe last week and he encouraged me to connect with you. I'm in the process of exploring career options and would really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your own career and organization. I realize that you may have a very busy schedule, but would there be an opportunity to speak with you either in person or over the phone for about 20-30 minutes in the next couple of weeks? I sincerely appreciate any time you have to help me learn more about the field of finance. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*Thank you,*

*Anita Job*

## NETWORKING/INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- ◇ How did you get into your field? Have the person describe his/her career path.
- ◇ What do you like most/least about the work you do?
- ◇ How is the field changing or what can be expected in the next couple of years?
- ◇ What does a typical day look like your job?
- ◇ What education/training/experience would you recommend to get into the position or field?
- ◇ What key skills or characteristics do you look for in a candidate for openings in the field or job?
- ◇ What is the culture or the environment of your company or industry like?
- ◇ What advice do you have for me?
- ◇ Do you have any additional contacts in the field that you'd recommend I speak to?

### **Need more help?**

Career Advisors in the Albers Placement Center are trained, knowledgeable and available to help you with networking, LinkedIn, and advice about your job/internship search.  
Make an appointment today!

### **Albers Placement Center**

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