

XXIII Networking with Alumni

What is networking?

- Networking is about forming **RELATIONSHIPS**.
- Networking is a **PROCESS** centered around the specific goal of obtaining information, advice and referrals. Your goal in every contact should be to get information that will enable you to make more contacts to move your job search forward.
- Networking is **NOT NECESSARILY** about asking for a job.
- Networking is **ABSOLUTELY NOT** about using people.

When should I network?

- **almost always !**
- network in formal situations - receptions sponsored by law firms or bar associations
- network in informal situations - alumni club parties, service days, happy hours, sporting events

With whom should I network?

- **almost anyone** - friends, family, interviewers, alumni, faculty & administration
- Since networking is a **PROCESS** of building **RELATIONSHIPS**, people you meet in a variety of settings may be able to provide you with valuable information and contacts that lead you to job information.

What can I expect from a networking contact?

- information
- referrals to others who might assist you
- feedback about your resume and cover letter
- assistance in formulating a "plan of attack" for a specific geographic location or practice area
- information about market and hiring trends
- moral support

How do I start the process of networking?

- Send a letter of introduction, and include your resume.
 - state who you are
 - state how you got the contact's name — referral from someone else, alumni directory list, newspaper article, etc.
 - tell the contact what you want — to talk about your eventual career choices, to ask for information, to seek help in reviewing your resume, etc.
 - tell the contact when you will call — generally a week or two after you mail the letter
 - indicate how the contact can reach you should he or she wish to call you first or give you a more convenient time / way to contact him or her
- Follow up with the telephone call.
 - call when you said you would
 - ask if the contact has time to talk or if another time would be more convenient
 - keep the initial call short — no more than 15 minutes, unless the contact indicates that he or she is willing to talk longer
- Send a thank-you note immediately. Remember that the contact is taking personal time to help you, and

you should show that you are grateful.

What do I say or do during an initial phone call?

- Present yourself in a positive, confident and self-assured — not negative or desperate — manner.
- Explain your purpose in calling the contact.
- Show how the contact might be helpful to you.
- Present your background and skills to put the meeting in context.
- After doing your research, ask questions to solicit additional information you need, including:
 - your contact's career and background, including career path
 - your contact's work — how your contact developed his or her practice into an area of specialization
 - what your contact likes least / best about work
 - quality-of-life considerations with respect to a particular type of practice and a geographic location
 - qualities for which your contact's employer looks when making employment decisions
 - comments about your resume, cover letter and interviewing techniques
 - additional experiences or education that might benefit you
 - names of other persons that you might contact
- LISTEN to the answers and build on those answers to ask additional questions.
- Ask for names of others who might be helpful in your career search.
- Be considerate of your contact's time.

What do our alumni expect to do during a networking contact?

- They will be up-front about their limitations — what they can and cannot do for you.
 - Don't let the "cannots" put you off. Take advantage of the "cans".
 - Respect their time constraints. Even if you had an appointment set, things can change, even at the last minute. You must be flexible and accommodating since you are the one seeking the help.
- They will tell you what they know — about their job, about their city, etc.
- They should be able to help you assess your career goals — whether what you want to do fits with other constraints on your life or with your education and experience.
- They should be your cheerleader.
- They should encourage and facilitate additional networking contacts.
- They should follow up.
 - They should, but often do not.
 - So, you should follow up — with a note updating the contact on your job-search status, or with a follow-up phone call — whatever feels right based on your initial and subsequent contacts.

How else can I network?

- Attend alumni events on-campus and in your hometowns.
 - If you don't like going alone, bring a friend.
 - If you're terrified of "cold contacts", volunteer to help.
- Go where those you want to meet are.

Anything special to know about ND alumni contacts?

- As a member of the Notre Dame family, you have an obligation to steward alumni contacts appropriately – don't mess things up for those who come after you! Treat an alumnus/a contact as you would treat a friend or family member, because that's how they see themselves – as a member of a family you just

joined.

- Be prepared to listen to them reminisce — and actively engage those memories.
- Be prepared to talk about football / basketball / and maybe even the occasional hockey game.
- Find out in advance if you can whether the contact had any of the same professors you had — a common professor will create an instant bond.
- Find out whether they will be coming to campus soon, so that you can meet them to thank them in person.