

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Seaver College Career Center, Pepperdine University
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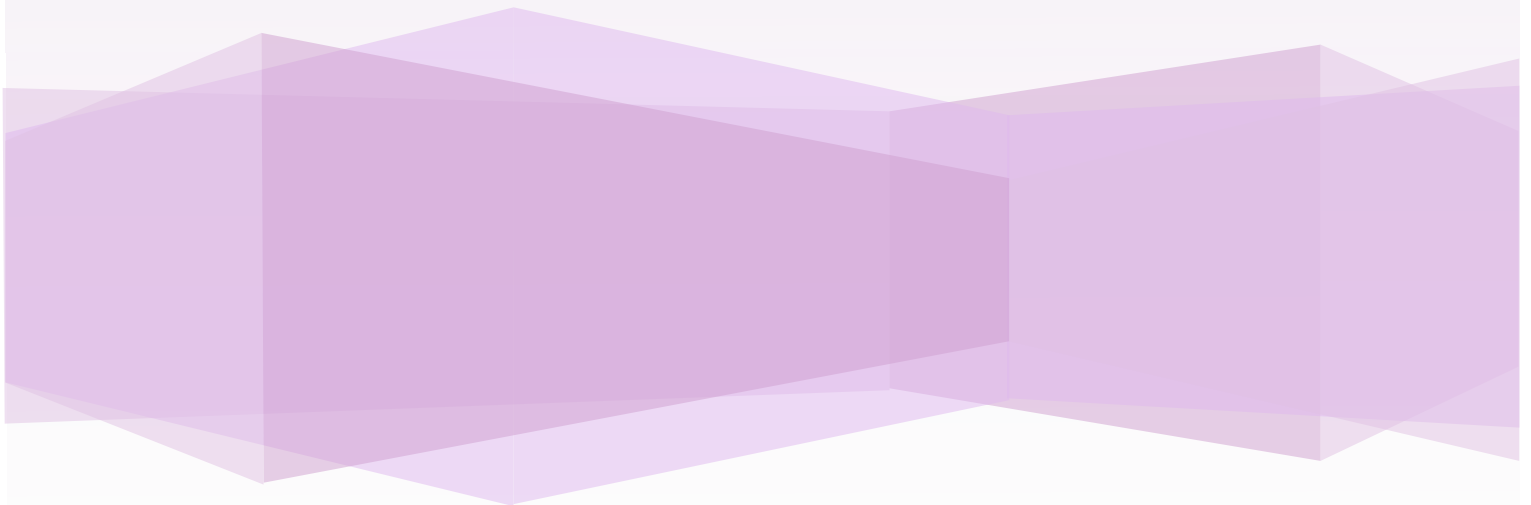


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About Networking

What is networking?

Networking is the simply development of relationships that result in the expansion of your career and social opportunities, as well as the chance to invest in the opportunities of others. This can occur at any time, any where – at the grocery store, gym, online, or at work.

Successful networking allows you to make your skills and abilities known and learn about the skills of others. Over time, the fruit of good networking will be short-term and long-term.

Developing Career Opportunities Through Networking

Experience has shown that informal networking is a rich source of job leads and information about unpublished job opportunities. Successful networking requires that you maintain a network of contacts, have a story, and tell that story effectively.

Identify Your Network

To begin developing your network, organize the contact information of your existing professional and social connections. This list may include professors, friends, relatives, colleagues, former colleagues, and fellow members of professional, religious, or civic organizations.

The next step is to add to this list by making new connections through attending events organized local and affinity groups, such as Pepperdine Alumni Chapters, as well as reaching out to career mentors through the online, Pepperdine Alumni Network for informational interviews and referrals. Web resources to find your local Pepperdine networking opportunities and connect with alumni career mentors are available in the appendix.

Know Your Story

As you begin building your network, you must have a story to tell. And you may be prompted to tell this story while waiting in line at the post office, supermarket, or anywhere you encounter people and engage in a conversation that turns to careers. Your story will be the response to questions like, “What do you do?”, or “What kinds of career opportunities are you looking for?”. Vague or generic responses to these questions communicate that you have not defined your story. Your story is a summary of your skills, abilities, and interests. To be prepared for any networking situation, be able to summarize your story in 10-seconds and 20-second scripts.

20-Second Introduction

A 20-second introduction is a concrete, highly focused tool to help you tell your story about who you are professionally. It conveys a message that introduces your unique skills, qualifications, and the services you have to offer. It should be brief and intriguing enough so that your audience wants to hear more.

Here is the general outline. Be sure to include something personal as well as professional. You may modify this to fit your particular needs:

HELLO, (and a handshake if possible)

My name is _____ .

I am currently with _____. (Company and position, if applicable)

I have professional experienced in _____ and _____. (background and interests), where I used _____, _____, _____. (skills)

But, in my free time I enjoy _____, _____ (interests, hobbies)

This should prompt questions, and that is what the “20-second introduction” is all about.

Reach Out and Make New Contacts

Most networking opportunities will take place in person at an event or public space. For information on working the room, see “How to Work a Room” in this document. Other times networking takes place through a referral. In this case, the initial contact may be less natural. When preparing to reach out to a referral or an alumni career mentor, download the Complete Guide to Informational Interviews on the career center web site. See the appendix for exact web address.

Good Networker vs. Bad Networker

Good networkers are not sales people. Networking is not a sales transaction and should not feel like one. Hard- and soft-sell tricks and techniques salespeople use to overcome defenses and objections are easily recognized. Anything that signals, “this isn’t a personal interaction between two individuals” will dampen spontaneity and contacts’ willingness to help later on. In your interactions, remember the three Cs: *concise, casual and conversational*.

Good networkers give contacts time to speak. Whether at a cocktail party or informational interview, use the 80% listen / 20% speak rule. Demonstrate that you have been listening and ensure you understand by paraphrasing (“Let me see if I understand you correctly”).

Good networkers respect time. They do not ask for too much or too little (a request for a “20-minute meeting” is naive or a misrepresentation), and they mind the clock vigilantly once a meeting commences. At a cocktail party, good networkers do not impose too much time with any single party guest; limit yourself to 8 to 10 minutes.

Good networkers offer to help. They show sincere gratitude for offers to make personal introductions, generously offer to make introductions to others, follow up promptly on referrals, and never use the contact’s name for referral purposes without permission.

Good networkers respect confidentiality. They do not attribute information to a contact or other source without reflecting on whether the disclosure will compromise the person.

Good networkers value gratitude. They communicate appreciation at the meeting, inform the contact of where and how his counsel has been valuable, provide the contact with information that may be of interest and speak warmly of the contact’s helpfulness to others.

When all goes well, the networker creates a treasure that goes far beyond help in securing employment. Thoughtful, considerate networking creates lasting sources of information, support and friendship that pay dividends in countless other contexts.

Poor networkers lose interest. Bad networkers milk short-term interactions. Once employed or re-employed, they allow their networks to atrophy, confirming suspicions that they were interested solely in personal gain. Contacts who’ve been burned, demeaned or simply forgotten are entitled to cynicism - which diminishes their willingness to help others.

How to Work a Room

Maximize your time by making the most of business social events to make new relationships. Below is a list of strategies to make working the room effective, and enjoyable.

Prepare Before The Event

Set an Objective

Ask yourself: "What do I want to happen at this event?" Your objective may be to rub elbows, learn scuttlebutt, or plea for a pet project. Knowing your purpose meaning for being there and the answer to this question will be your message throughout the event.

Relax

Tell yourself, "My presence alone produces valuable results." This reduces the pressure to perform and relaxes you. Just being there is valuable.

Eat

Eat before you attend, so that your attention is on the people and not your growling stomach. This also allows you to keep your extra hand free for shaking hands.

Prepare Your 10-second Introduction

Write and memorize your 10-second introduction, which is a variation of the 20-second introduction described in this document. Use this when someone asks, "What do you do?". The key is to keep it quick and natural. Include simply your name, company and position, and company or position specialization.

Seed Your Message

Leverage the Hospitality of Event Organizers

If you are attending a networking event where you will not know many people, contact the person organizing the event. Explain that you're new and ask if someone can introduce you to some people at the event. Most people will be happy to oblige this request.

Likewise, arrive about ten minutes early and review name tags at the entry table. If you see someone you would like to meet, ask the organizer or greeter to make the introduction.

Check out the Guest list

Find out beforehand who'll be there. When our finance department held an open house for a retiring supervisor, I studied the organizational chart to learn the names of people I might meet. Never let yourself say, "If I'd only known so-and-so was going to be there."

Make An Entrance

Don't Be Too Early

If you expect to be acquainted with many attendees, there is no pressing need to be early and review name badges. Instead, take a hint from top executives, and arrive later. How late depends on the event and who might arrive early, which is worth considering before making your plans.

Let Your Posture Speak

Watch your body language. As you enter a room, your body language announces your feelings. You can skulk in a room as Johnny Timid or behave as someone whose presence produces valuable results. Smile and shake hands. You may have to act more positive and confident than you feel, but you'll soon be fine.

Getting Connected

Attendees often gather in cliques. This can strand new arrivals, who stand alone, fearing everyone is looking at them.

Handling Food and Drink

Grab a drink and begin traveling around the room. Always hold your drink, especially if it is cold, in your left hand. This leaves your right hand free for introductions and keeps it dry.

Travel Strategically

If you do not know many people, stand near and around food stations. These locations attract a variety of guests, people are generally more at ease while eating, and the food itself offers an easy conversation starter. Conversely, avoid standing near the bar. This area tends to be dense with people and produces extra noise.

If you are seeking someone specifically, stay near the entry way of the room. Here, you can keep an eye on who enters.

Choosing Groups to Enter

Carefully choose individuals or groups of people to enter into conversation. Avoid groups of two, but give preference to groups of 3 to 5. The conversation is likely to be general, requiring less specific knowledge about a subject. Likewise, larger groups are more open to allowing a new member.

If you have ever entered a group and quickly found out they are all colleagues, this can be uncomfortable. Before entering, take a cue from the proximity in which the group members are standing to each other. The closer they stand, the more familiar they are with each other.

The ideal group conversation to enter has 3 to 4 smiling, engaged members standing a comfortable distance apart.

Entering and Contributing to Conversation

Make your presence felt in creative and kind ways. The best way to enter into conversation is by asking a simple question. Once you're in, offer a sense of humor, smile, encouraging words, recognition or praise.

As a rule of thumb, practice the 80/20 rule. Listen 80% and speak only 20%. If the conversation is beyond your area of knowledge, play your contribution safe by asking an intelligent question.

Exiting Conversation

As a rule of thumb, hold conversation with an individual no more than 8 to 10 minutes. To excuse yourself and the individual to meet other people, simply say, "It has been a pleasure speaking with you". If you would like to speak further, request their card and follow-up with them on a later date to meet over coffee or lunch. To make this natural transition, say "I'm glad we had this opportunity to talk. Maybe I could call you, or join you for coffee or lunch. May I have your card?"

If they won't allow this graceful exit, excuse yourself to the washroom, then move on.

Collect and Give a Card

If you meet a contact you would like to invest further, you will need a business card. Likewise, you will want your new contact to have your card. To avoid being pushy, request a business card first. Then, reciprocate the receipt of their card, by giving out one of yours. If your contact does not have a business card, simply write his/her contact info on the back of your cards. By requesting a business card, you do not have to monopolize someone's time at the event and it gives you the opportunity to re-connect over coffee or lunch for a longer conversation.

Saying Goodbye

Alerting the Host

Know when you want to leave and tell your host. When the time comes, feel confident that your departure is expected. Stay only as long as you're relatively comfortable. If you plan to leave particularly early, alert the host beforehand.

Making Your Exit

Be clear in your good-byes, and know that leaving is fine. Smile, wave or shake hands with your host, friends and key contacts. Outside, take a deep breath and say to yourself: "That went well."

Meet The Power

Networking with Top Executives

Be ready to take the initiative when you encounter top managers. If you find yourself at a casual social event and in conversation with a high ranking executive, you can always rely on asking an insightful question. This communicates that you care about his/her opinion. To make it most natural, keep the question related to the context of the event. Such as, "This event seems to be successful and people are enjoying themselves. How are you doing this evening?", Or "The presentation emphasized segmentation by geographics, whereas I was expecting the segmentation to focus on age instead. What do you think?"

After the Event

Follow-Up With New Contacts

Phone or send a thank-you note after an event if it seems appropriate. Forced gestures are usually ineffective.

About Business Cards

Business cards are still commonplace for professionals in all industries. They quickly share contact information and professional highlights, such as position title and employer.

Making Business Cards

There are many online resources to design and print custom business cards. A short list of highlighted websites are available in the appendix. When you create your own cards, consider the following:

- Make your cards industry appropriate: Creative images and graphics are most appropriate only for creative industries.
- Include current and preferred contact information only
- There is a list optional information to include on your business. Consider your web site, blog web address, picture of yourself, mailing address.
- If you are networking for career opportunities, include your unique skills and abilities, professional awards, and any special credentials or certifications.

Using Business Cards

Storage

The most important thing to remember when using business cards is to carry them with you, in a purse, briefcase, wallet, and in your car. Cards are useless if you cannot give them out.

Appropriate Use

Depending on your industry, use your business cards to connect with potential customers, clients, or employers. For a local realtor, you may be inclined to post your card at a local coffee shop. Conversely, this would not be appropriate for an aerospace engineer.

When you receive a business card, follow-up within 3 days via a casual correspondence method, such as email. Offer a simple follow-up message expressing your pleasure in meeting him/her. This solidifies the relationship, so that the next correspondence is more natural.

Additionally, when you receive a business card make notes about the person on the back about the conversation, date of conversation, and setting in which you met. This will help you remember this encounter and will allow you to reference this encounter in your later communications.

Simple Tips

Keep your cards clean. This means use a card holder so they are not bent or chipped. Likewise, avoid using your cards as coasters.

Networking Using Social Media

When you meet someone new, you will likely Google them to learn more. Likewise, your new networking contacts and potential employers will also Google you. Social media is an easy, free way to manage and control information about you on the internet.

Just try it - Google your name, and then your name and most recent employer. Review the top ten hits.

New Trends in Recruiting

The old-fashioned way firms find new hires include the use of headhunters, employee referrals, and off- or on-line job boards. But, according to John Campagnino, Accenture's head of global recruiting, if you don't have a profile on LinkedIn, you're nowhere. Partly motivated by the cheaper, faster recruiting he can do online, Campagnino plans to make as many as 40% of his hires in the next few years, beginning in 2010, through social media. He says: "This is the future of recruiting for our company."

As companies turn to the web to seek prospective job candidates, it is no longer advantageous to free the web of your professional information. Instead, the trend is to present your professional skills as attractively as possible. Campagnino reminds professionals that Facebook is for fun. Tweets have a short shelf life. If you are serious about managing your career, the only social site that really matters is LinkedIn.

All About LinkedIn

The reason LinkedIn works so well for professional matchmaking is that most of its members already have jobs. A cadre of happily employed people use it to research clients before sales calls, ask their connections for advice, and read up on where former colleagues are landing gigs.

In this environment, job seekers can do their networking without looking as if they're shopping themselves around. This population is more valuable to recruiters as well.

Tips for Using LinkedIn:

- Before an interview, research your would-be boss or those who will be interviewing you. Look over what they do and where they have been to get an idea of who they are before you meet them

- Create your professional profile that highlights your skills, education, and experience. Early in your career, do not hesitate to include volunteer work, internships, or awards received. When you Google search your name, make it your goal that your LinkedIn profile is the first hit.
- Update your profile regularly. Upload professional powerpoint presentations or other portfolio work. Your contacts are alerted regularly of new posts onto your account (just like the weekly Facebook page updates).
- Complete Your Profile: The more detailed your LinkedIn profile, the more chances you will have to be found and to be contacted. Complete your LinkedIn profile as carefully as you write your resume and provide prospective employers with detailed information on your skills and experience. If you're currently unemployed, list your current position as "Open to opportunities".
- Include a photo: This allows your acquaintances to recognize you and feel more secure in inviting you to connect. Note that the photo can be no larger than 80×80 pixels. Do make sure your photo represents the professional you, not the personal you, because LinkedIn is all about professional networking.
- Contact Settings: Your contact settings let your connections (and hiring managers and recruiters) know your availability. Options include: career opportunities, consulting offers, new ventures, job inquiries, and reference requests.
- Link to Your Personal Website: Your LinkedIn profile allows you to post a link to your personal or professional website. Take advantage of this option if you have a site you want to show off, especially if you work in visual or graphic arts, or keep a professional blog.
- Include keywords and skills: Add these specific terms so that your profile will be picked up in relevant searches.
- Whenever you make a new contact, locate them on LinkedIn and invite them to connect.
- Join a LinkedIn Group, there are 500,000 of them, based on companies, schools, and interests. You will have access to discussion boards, industry updates, and a greater professional network, through membership.

Maintaining Network Connections

Building Trust

Once you make the initial connection, you must maintain your network so that they become and stay fruitful over time. The strongest network is one strengthened by time and trust. To begin the trust-building process, it may take 6 months to 2 years.

To build trust, you must show that you are trust worthy. This means that you follow-up when you say that you'll follow-up; send the referral if you offer to send the referral, ect.

Keeping Your Network Active

Do not let your network die due to lack of attention. All it takes is a single email or note to re-establish a connection. In this, holidays or birthdays are great reasons to send a casual

communication. Likewise take advantage of special events in your own life, such as promotions, or life events, to send a communication.

Appendix

Recommended Web Sites

Business Card design and print:

<http://us.moo.com/>

www.zazzle.com/businesscards

To print from home, consider using Office Depot or Staples blank cards and design templates.

If you have additional recommendations, please send your recommendations to Katrina.holland@pepperdine.edu.

Networking events:

Seaver College Alumni Events and Programs: <http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/alumni/connected/>

Pepperdine Alumni Regional Chapters: <http://www.pepperdine.edu/alumni/chapters/>

Professional Associations:

<http://www.asaecenter.org/Community/Directories/AssociationSearch.cfm>

Online Networking:

Waves Hiring Waves and Pepperdine University Alumni LinkedIn Groups: <http://www.linkedin.com>

Pepperdine Alumni Network: <https://alumni.pepperdine.edu/>

Informational Interviews:

Complete Guide to Informational Interviews:

<http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/careercenter/alumni/connect/>

The concept of the elevator speech is based in the understanding that most of us have only 30-seconds to seize an opportunity to share what we can offer and why someone should give us a job. It is important to write and memorize this speech because often times we must give this pitch when we unexpectedly encounter someone of influence – say, in the elevator, at a board meeting, or even the golf course.

When to Use an Elevator Speech

This speech comes in useful most commonly in the following scenarios.

- Job Fairs
- Networking events
- Company meetings
- Interviews (For instance, in response to “Tell me about yourself”)
- Anytime you are in the presence of a potential employer or networking contact

The Goal

An effective elevator speech will accomplish a few things. First, it accurately and persuasively conveys to the listener who you are and what you can offer. Secondly, an elevator speech should entice the listener to want to continue the conversation and learn more.

What To Say

There are three primary pieces of information that must be included in your elevator speech. And to keep your speech under 30-seconds, you may limit your speech to these three topics as well.

1. Clearly state your interests or reason for the conversation
2. Clearly state the skills that you offer
3. Share your unique qualifications with a direct invitation to continue the conversation

Elevator Speech Examples

“I am very interested in Database Management. In my coursework at Pepperdine, we examined how systems such as Oracle can greatly enhance an organization’s efficiency. I later put this to good use at XYZ Corporation where I designed, maintained, and ran queries for clients in the higher education sector. I look forward to applying and building on these experiences, and would be pleased to do so at your organization.”

“For years I have known that financial planning for individuals and families is the field for me. I enjoy working with customers to explore their resources, and work toward their goals. Through my experience at Bank of America Home Loans, I understand the unique challenges of this field. I am eager to put my leadership and financial management skills to good use at your company.”

“Human resources is my field of choice. These interests grew exponentially in my experience at SHRM where I assisted in the membership recruitment department and my time at Gallop as an HR Generalist. I am particularly interested in recruiting new talent and training current personnel. I hope to do this with a large, private organization such as this one.”

“I am very excited to jumpstart my career as a Market Research Analyst. In a course at Pepperdine where we conducted surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews, I found that I can emerge as a real leader in this field. We helped XYZ Corporation rethink their university marketing campaign, and increase response rates by 10%. I would like to help your organization experience similar successes.”

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Adaptations from "Savvy Job Hunters Learn to Network Nicely", "How to Develop Opportunities Through Networking", and "Seven Steps to Business Socializing"