



Networking & Employment

What is networking?

Networking is an important part of your job search and then professional development once in the workplace. Networking is the use of personal relationships people have with one another to increase exposure to information and opportunity.

Why network?

Developing professional contacts can be a key component to gaining valuable opportunities for your future. Whether you are attending a networking function or an information evening, establishing a network of supportive peers can help you make the most of your potential such as:

- Finding out about different job roles in your area of interest, career pathways and obtaining up to date industry information
- Identifying professional associations relevant to your area of interest and employers you might like to work for
- Building confidence in your ability to speak to employers
- Discovering what skills and experience employers are looking for
- Making contacts to obtain work experience or get your foot in the door
- Tapping into the hidden job market

Know the numbers



Up to 70% of jobs are not advertised, meaning you will need to use your network.

Getting started

Networking takes time and practice so start early, ideally in the first year of University and begin with events on campus such as Careers Fair and Employer Presentations organised by the Careers Centre – see uwa.careerhub.com.au for details. From there expand your networking to:

- People you already know may be able to assist with your networking and job searching process. Make a list of who you know using the 5 F's of networking; Family; Friends; Faculty; Fellow Peers & Alumni; Foundations and Associations. These people may be able to help you clarify your skills, strengths, employment goals and strategies. They may also know other people who you could contact regarding paid or unpaid work related opportunities (volunteering, informational interviewing, work shadowing, work experience, professional associations).
- Professional associations - Attending association or industry events, conferences and seminars provides great opportunities to meet people working in your intended industry, and student memberships are often available at a discounted rate. Search in Google for professional associations/ societies/ student clubs in your area of interest.
- eNetworking using Social Media – use websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to research organisations and connect in regards to industry developments and employment opportunities. Up to 80% of employers can look on social media when assessing a candidate so keep the content you post professional and something you're happy with a recruiter seeing.

Networking Tips

- **Have a clear idea of your purpose for networking** – if you are attending a networking event, do some research on the group first, as this can help to give a positive first impression. Remember to be open-minded and take a long-term view. Some meetings are based more on learning or gaining inspiration rather than on career opportunities and openings alone. Remember it is better to make 3 good contacts than 10 rushed ones.
- **Dress presentably** when attending meetings or events and try to relax. Think of it as a chance to make new friends, so try to smile and be yourself and people should be drawn to you accordingly. If you see someone standing alone, go up and introduce yourself. Many others will feel just as nervous as you do so a welcoming smile and “Hello” will not go astray. Remember to use a good firm handshake when introducing yourself, ask questions and listen.
- **You don't have to do all the talking** – listen politely and be interested in the conversation. Be a good listener. Encourage others to participate in the conversation and make sure that you are alert throughout their responses. Act as a sponge and attempt to soak in everything that is being said. You will be thankful later when you try to recall what you have learnt!
- **Networking is not supposed to be aggressive** - A pushy attitude may drive networkers away for good. Networking is a two way street – think about how you can help your contacts.
- **Ask Questions** - This is your chance to learn as much as you can so take advantage of the opportunity - you will only get out what you put in. Have some questions ready to ask – for instance – What do you see as the main issues for your industry right now? What would you tell someone thinking of entering this profession?
- **Vary the networking events you attend** - This way you are able to mingle with a wide spectrum of individuals and gain knowledge from various sectors and professions.
- **Create yourself a business card** including your course of study, university, contact details, and perhaps a link to your LinkedIn profile – see our specific LinkedIn handout for more help with this. Ensure you have a professional email address and voice mail.
- **Maintain a professional online profile** - Recruiters often use social media to check out your skills and experience. Be certain to maintain an up to date LinkedIn profile. The Careers Centre can review this for you.
- **Say thank you** in person or via email - let your contacts know that you value their assistance, ideas, and suggestions.
- **Follow up** on advice and respond to phone calls and emails from contacts promptly. Remember to keep accurate records of all your interactions – don't rely on your memory to recall details.

Career Mentor Link

Career Mentor Link (CML) is a fantastic opportunity to make industry connections. The programs matches you with an industry professional who supports, listens, guides and encourages you to develop in your chosen career. CML runs annually and is open to all students who have completed at least of one year of study and to all postgraduate students. Further details available at www.careermentorlink.uwa.edu.au.

Develop an elevator pitch

Prepare a brief introductory pitch (20 – 30 seconds)

with key points about yourself, your skills and your study. Be able to describe who you are professionally and the benefits you might bring. Intend for this to be captive and value-adding, with the hope to attract interest for the conversation to continue or further dealings. For example:

Hi my name is Eleanor Smith and I am a third year Environmental science student. I am looking for a position that will allow me to use my research and analysis skills. Over the past few years, I've been strengthening these skills through my work with a local council, focusing on water conservation strategies and water quality. Eventually, I'd like to develop educational programs to increase water conservation awareness. I read that your organisation is involved in water quality projects. Can you tell me how someone with my experience could fit into your organisation?



Source:

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