NETWORKING

NETWORKING = RELATIONSHIPS

This is the most important step and the most time consuming, but effectively building your network will ultimately lead to a successful internship or job search.

In This Section

- Why it is important to network.
- What should be included in a personal pitch.
- How to prepare for an informational interview.
- About sample networking questions.
- About social media and other networking strategies.
Networking is Step 3 in the four-step process.

**STEP 3: NETWORK**
Identify specific departments or individuals at companies that interest you. To help you do this, you can use social media and contact alumni using Mason Career Network. Also, ask your professors, parents, relatives, and any other acquaintances whether they have contacts at the places you’d like to intern.

**Why Network?**
Most jobs (70 to 80 percent) that are filled are discovered through networking. Networking can sound scary, but it doesn’t have to be if you understand the process. Networking simply means building relationships with people, and if you can add a new friend to Facebook, you have already proven that you can network! Here are a few helpful tips for beginning your networking adventure.

**YOUR PERSONAL PITCH**
Imagine you are on an elevator with an employer who has the ability to give you your dream job, and he or she introduces himself to you. Would you know what to say back to him or her to keep their attention? If you had developed and practiced your personal pitch you would! A personal pitch allows you to answer the following questions in 30 seconds or less:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you do best?
3. How have you made an impact?
4. What sets you apart?
5. What are you seeking?

For examples of personal pitches, visit careers.gmu.edu.

**PEOPLE WHO CAN GET YOU CONNECTED**
Your network is probably bigger than you think. To help you identify people to network with, think of the five Fs: Friends, Fellow Peers and Alumni, Faculty, Family, and Foundations and Professional Associations.

**Strategies for Networking**
Learn strategies and tips for successful networking.

**THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**
An informational interview is a structured meeting to gather information from a professional about a career field, an occupation, or an organization. This information can be used to help make a decision about a major or career or to help find out about job openings and qualifications required in particular fields.

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**Develop a List of Possible Contacts**
Develop a list of contacts from both professional and personal circles:

- Family, friends, professors, neighbors, classmates, and such.
- Members of professional associations.
- Alumni on Mason Career Network.
- People who have published articles in newspapers or journals in your field.

**Set Up the Meeting or Call**
You can arrange your interview by phone, e-mail, sending an introductory letter, social networking sites, or in person. Read Script Guidelines for Arranging Interviews at careers.gmu.edu.

- Mason Career Network members indicate the ways they prefer to be contacted and reviewing the “Contact” section of a person’s LinkedIn profile can help you determine whether or not they are likely to help you. (Helpful tip: If a person has “Expertise Requests” in their contact section, this is a good indication that they would be willing to talk with you.)
- Once you have found someone to connect with, you can send them an e-mail to introduce yourself, and the reason you are contacting them.

**Come Prepared**
- Make sure your resume is up to date in case they ask for a copy of it. You may also consider asking your contact what information is most important to include on a resume for that field.
- Research the person’s field and organization through resources in the Career Library or on the Internet.
- Develop a list of questions.
- Set personal goals for the meeting. Typical goals for an informational interview include the following:
  - Learning more about the career path you are considering
  - Presenting your background and interests clearly
  - Learning more about the company itself
  - Obtaining referrals
**Informational Interview Etiquette**

- **Never** ask for a job during an informational interview.
- If you are meeting someone in person for your informational interview, dress in the most professional attire that your wardrobe allows. (The closer you are to interviewing for a job, the more critical it is to dress professionally.)
- Arrive or call on time for the interview. If an emergency or unexpected problem arises that prevents or delays your arrival, call the person immediately.
- Ask your interviewee if there is anything you can do to help them, remember, networking is a two-way street.
- Thank the interviewee for their time and send a follow-up thank-you note or e-mail.
- Enjoy the experience! Because you are the interviewer, you do not have the same pressures as in a job interview. At the same time, the experience helps you develop your interviewing skills—firm handshake, good eye contact, relaxed but erect posture, clear speaking, careful listening.

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE NETWORKING**

Using social media and online resources for networking is one of the best ways to find jobs and internships. Social media allows employers to target job candidates with a very specific set of skills, recruit passive job candidates who might not otherwise apply for positions, and is less expensive than other methods of recruiting job candidates.

If you don’t have an easy to find and positive online presence, you might be missing out on exciting job opportunities. See the information on the right for more information about networking using LinkedIn and Twitter and the information below for ensuring that you have a good online image for employers to see.

**LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)**

Invite friends, coworkers, and supervisors to join your network, receive recommendations from people you’ve worked with, and search the more than 100 million professionals already on the LinkedIn network. Find jobs using the jobs and employer directories.

**SAMPLE NETWORKING QUESTIONS**

Whether a planned or chance meeting, you should always have questions prepared to ask a potential contact. These are some examples:

- How did you enter this field? What preparation did you have (classes, activities, experience)?
- What skills, abilities and personal qualities do you find most important in your work?
- How would you advise me to get started in building experience in this field?
- What’s your perspective for the next few years in terms of job prospects in this field?
- What are typical career paths in this field?
- What academic major would you recommend as preparation for your field?
- I’ve built a target list of organizations in this field. Would you be willing to look at my list and give me any suggestions you might have?
- What kinds of projects do you work on?
- What kinds of backgrounds do people in this organization (field) have?
- Are there specific courses you would recommend?
- What types of experience, paid or unpaid, would you recommend as preparation for this type of work?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What do you see as disadvantages to working in your type of job?
- What do you like most and least about your work?
- What are the personal qualities of people who are successful in this field?
- Given my background and interests, are there other organizations you might suggest I explore?
- What are the most pressing needs and issues for your department within the overall organization?

For more sample networking questions, visit careers.gmu.edu.
How can you use LinkedIn for networking?

- LinkedIn allows you to market yourself and create a professional brand.
- It enables you to establish, build, and maintain a professional network.
- You can grow your network by connecting to friends, family, supervisors, co-workers, classmates, professors, advisors, and others with similar interests or skills.
- You can share and gain information about career fields, companies, industry experts, and job leads.
- Employers use LinkedIn to find candidates for their positions.
- You can follow and conduct research on companies of interest to you and search job listings.
- You can see if you have connections to a company and ask them to possibly help you network your way to a job!

Quick Links

- learn.linkedin.com
  Tips to use LinkedIn.
- bit.ly/L9Uu56
  Help creating a profile
- bit.ly/KInJPR
  LinkedIn’s “10 Official Tips to Enhance Your Job Search.”
- linkedin.com/studentjobs
  Jobs for students and recent graduates.
- linkedin.com/skills/
  Adding “skills” to your LinkedIn profile.
- linkedintelligence.com/
  Linked Intelligence—an online library of resources.

Facebook (www.facebook.com)

Use Facebook to build a network with classmates, alumni, friends, family, and coworkers. Highlight your work experience and education on your profile. Be sure to keep your profile professional and tasteful. Facebook has networking applications like BeKnown, Branchout and Glassdoor.

Twitter (www.twitter.com)

Using Twitter, you can follow and have real-time communications with hiring managers and working professionals in your industry area. These are some tips for using Twitter for networking!

- Maintain a professional profile: A Twitter profile bio is limited to 160 characters; be sure to include your location and the type of work you do or are looking for, plus keywords that recruiters might use to search for prospective candidates. Don’t forget to add a professional-looking photograph.
- Use Twitter add-on applications for job hunting include Tweetmyjobs or Twitjobsearch.
- Follow career coaches, resume writers, job industry experts, and government employment agencies to keep up with hiring trends. Regional groups (@dcioujscouncil) and job boards (@indeed) are also on Twitter.
- Follow hashtags. Twitter uses hashtags (# single word) to tag individual tweets or conversations on specific subjects. Examples of job-related hashtags include #job, #jobs, #jobsearch, #career, #employment, #salary, and #hire.
- Participate in chats sponsored by professional groups, career experts, or agencies.

Quick Link

- To locate job resources that fit your interest, you can use the Twitter search function and select relevant keywords based upon your interests. For example, if you want to work in the public relations field in New York City, you could type “job openings,” “public relations,” and “New York.”

Google Yourself

If you don’t like what you find when you Google yourself, chances are future employers won’t like it either. Should your Google search return something you wouldn’t want your new boss to see, contact the owner of the site you found the content on and ask him or her to remove it. If your Google search leads to the discovery that you share a name with someone who has “inappropriate” content on the web, you may consider using “Me on the Web” (http://bit.ly/Q39pkz), a feature that can help you understand and manage what people see when they search for you on Google.

OTHER NETWORKING STRATEGIES

Listservs and Professional Associations

In addition to professional networking sites, you can join industry-specific listservs and professional associations online. Many professional associations offer student memberships, have listservs and career websites that include job and internship opportunities, and post events such as networking mixers, conferences, and meetings on their websites.

Networking Events and Activities

Networking events with professional associations, academic departments or even social groups can be intimidating, but they can also help you to connect with people you wouldn’t meet otherwise.

- Before a networking event, make sure your LinkedIn profile is up to date and that you are comfortable with your personal pitch. When you are prepared, you will feel comfortable introducing yourself to new people and connecting with them after the event on LinkedIn.
- If you are attending a conference or professional association meeting, do some research about the speakers and participants before the event by reading their bios and seeing if they have a LinkedIn profile. This will allow you to see if you have anything in common and give you ideas of topics to discuss if you have an opportunity to mingle.