

Networking Guide

Professional networking is a powerful strategy to leverage your current and ongoing career success. Networking happens over meals or during social gatherings where you can make lasting relationships, get employment leads, land a job, or get a promotion. You can effectively network even without previous experience in formal networking. We want to help you network like a pro! Read this guide and reach out if you would like to discuss networking strategy further.

First Networking Rule

Make Fewer Statements, Ask More Questions! The timeless advice offered by Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is that you “allow the other person to do a great deal of the talking.” By nature, we humans love to talk and share about ourselves. This professional networking forms a core tactic to achieve two goals at once: help the other person feel good about their interaction with you and help yourself to quickly gain relevant insight from them, even within the context of a single conversation. The easiest way to keep the other person talking and loving you the entire time is by asking the right open-ended questions.

Why Open-Ended Questions? Open-ended questions require more than a simple yes or no response. These questions help show your interest in the other person and allow you to build and maintain rapport. If you are not genuinely interested in the other person, there is no specific question that will help you be a better networker.

Student Responsibility

People want to know they are talking with a prepared, honest, dependable person they can trust and like. Networking is a way to have a connection point and gather unique information from professionals and employers. You only get one chance!

During the Networking

- Approach professionals and engage in conversation. Circulate the room to meet as many professionals as you can.
- You lead the networking! You are responsible for asking questions and leading the conversations. Be ready to deliver your [elevator pitch](#).
- You can discover a shared interest and talk about that further.
- Appear elegant and professional and showcase your communication skills.
- Be confident, polite, friendly, respectful, and smile. Have appropriate body posture and body language. Make eye contact.
- Exchange business cards or contact information at the end of your conversations.

After the Networking

- Follow up with the professions & employers you met during networking. Write a [thank you note or email](#).

Possible Questions to Ask

1. How did you get involved in ____?
2. What advice would you give someone just starting in this profession/industry?
 - a. Great follow-up question to #1. It shows your humility and opens the door for mentoring.
3. What does a typical day look like in your current job?
4. What do you find most rewarding about working in this profession?
5. What skills do you find essential for your current role?
6. How has your education prepared you for this role?
7. Can you share your challenges in this role/organization/industry?
8. What does the training of a new employee look like in your office?
9. How is your work performance evaluated?
10. What type of professional development has your employer offered you?
 - a. Follow-up question: Do you feel your current professional development opportunities align with best practices across the industry?
11. What professional associations would you recommend joining for professional development?
12. What separates your business from the others/competition?
 - a. This question permits people to tout their unique abilities/competencies/skills. Ask this question in a polite and inquisitive tone to avoid sounding challenging.
13. What significant changes have you seen/experienced in your profession?
 - a. Great question for cross-generational networking, and it allows a person to reminisce and draw from previous experiences as they share insight and advice with you.
14. What are the coming trends in your area of expertise?
15. How would you recommend I approach initiating my career in ____? Through volunteer work, internship/practicum, part-time/full-time employment?
16. If you could go back in time and give yourself advice when starting your career, what would it be?
17. What has changed in your company since you started working there?
18. What would make someone an ideal employee/intern for your company?
 - a. The information you glean from this response is priceless! If you are pursuing an opportunity within the organization, the response allows you to position yourself as a great candidate.

Additional Resources

- FPU Career Development & Experiential Learning Center | [Professionalism + Etiquette Workshop](#)