Making Connections essential for search success

Networking is not something that comes naturally to most people, but it is a critical element to any person’s career success. Most internships/jobs are found through a personal connection, so learning how to network will benefit you now and during your lifetime.

Steps to Developing Successful Connections

Determine Your Purpose for Developing Connections

- Learn about different careers
- Clarify your career goals & interests
- Build a network of professional relationships
- Assist with connecting to internships/entry-level positions/graduate schools

Find Contacts

Finding contacts is easier than it seems. Start with people you know: family, friends, faculty, co-workers. Then, use the following resources to help you develop a list of additional people who might be helpful.

- Alumni career link
- LinkedIn
- Career Fair
- Career networking nights
- Job shadow program
- Candidcareer
- Alumni career information panels
- Employer information sessions
- Company site visits
- Internship blog

Initiate Contacts

- LinkedIn invitation request

It is recommended that you send a personal invitation, instead of the standard invitation prepared by LinkedIn. In many cases you may not know the person first-hand that you are connecting with. You will have the most success making a connection if you have a shared interest, career path, university or LinkedIn group.

Example: As a Finance Junior at Bryant University I hope to work as a Financial Analyst and would like to connect for some expert advice about “breaking into” this career field. I would like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn and look forward to following up soon via email.

- Email request

Successful email correspondence is well written and concise. Make sure you are very clear about what you are asking for and always ask for information and/or advice, never a job or internship. Be gracious and express appreciation.

Example: Thank you so much for connecting with me through LinkedIn. I was excited to discover that there is a Bryant alum working for XYZ Co., where I have applied to an internship opportunity in Supply Chain Management. I wonder if you would have 15 minutes to speak with me over the telephone about how I could make a stronger connection for the position to which I have applied. I appreciate your time and hope to speak with you soon.

- Meet in person

If attending a Career Fair or other networking event, prepare a short introduction stating: who you are, what you do, and what you’re looking for.

Example: My name is Joe Doe and I am a Senior Marketing major at Bryant. I have been interning at XYZ Co. and am hoping to continue in that career path after graduation. I am interested in following up with you after this event for any tips or advice towards my job search.

Follow up

Following-up with your contact is perhaps the most important step. Scenarios to consider:

- Initial contact results in an informational interview/conversation via phone or in person. (see informational interview handout)
- No reply to initial contact. Wait a week and follow up by telephone or email. Remember, people are busy, don’t assume the worst. Be polite and persistent. After a 3rd follow up with no response, discontinue follow up and move on to another connection.

Etiquette Tips

- Show interest, enthusiasm and confidence
- Ask good questions
- Dress professionally
- Shake hands firmly
- Maintain eye contact
- Collect a business card
- Personalize correspondence
- Keep track of contacts
- Always write a thank you note
- Never ask directly for a job/internship
- Bring a resume to career fairs, not to networking events

Keep in touch

Maintain your network by periodically following up. Let your contacts know where you landed a job/internship, send relevant articles, offer to meet for lunch/coffee or connect them to someone in your network. Give back where you can.