

Networking Tips for Alumni

WHY NETWORK?

Referrals

Many positions in companies are not advertised – networking is the only way to find out about them. When you speak with a contact, you can ask for suggestions about organizations that may have recently gained new clients, hired additional staff, or had staff resign. Your contacts, based on what you have told them about your skills and interests, are often in a position to suggest possible employers. You will have an edge over other candidates if you are referred directly to employers by a contact.

Information and Advice

Many professionals are more than willing to provide others with information about careers and the marketplace in an informational interview. The “interviewing” is done by you and the information the contact shares with you is usually about his/her area of expertise and career path. Ideally, seek out contacts who are working in the field that interest you most. These contacts can share information about the market, salary structure, work hours, and typical responsibilities. You can ask for advice about such things as: the best way to tailor your resume; how to approach employers; or how to answer a question about your past work/academic history. Once you have made a list of potential contacts, think carefully about what information you want. Think about how you are going to approach your contact. You can initiate a conversation with some contacts face to face, by picking up the phone (appropriate for those you know well), via email, or by letter.

Sources for Networking Contacts

- ◆ RPI Alumni: Join the local chapter and start meeting contacts in your field.
- ◆ LinkedIn: Search for Alumni at the company
- ◆ Anyone with whom you participate in a volunteer or extracurricular activity
- ◆ Family, friends, neighbors, etc.
- ◆ Members of your place of worship
- ◆ Former coworkers or supervisors
- ◆ Members of a professional association related to your field of interest
- ◆ Past professors or college staff members
- ◆ Sorority or fraternity organizations

- ◆ People you know casually or meet through happenstance - on airplanes, at receptions, through activities, etc.

Tips for Networking at Receptions and Conferences

- ◆ **Research Attendees:** To the extent possible, obtain information about the people expected to attend so you may target certain people and make the most effective use of your time.
- ◆ **What to Wear:** If the event is at a firm, agency, or company right after work, wear business attire. If the event is casual, business casual is appropriate.
- ◆ **What to Bring:** Bring resumes in case you are asked for them. Have paper and a pen with you so that you may write down names and telephone numbers of people who do not bring business cards. Make sure to bring your own business cards.
- ◆ **Introducing Yourself:** If you are at a reception after a program, you could say, “Hello. My name is Sally Smith and I am currently a Business Analyst for Smith Company.” After the other person introduces him or herself, continue with, “I enjoyed listening to the speakers. My interest in the economy and the effect of rising fuel prices led me to come to the program and it has been such a learning experience. Did you feel you got a lot out of the presentation?”
- ◆ **Introducing Others:** Present the less senior person to the more senior person. As an example in the law firm context, you would say, “Ms. Senior Partner, may I introduce New Associate.”
- ◆ **Arriving at the Event:** Arrive on time. If you are arriving alone, thank the host or hostess, get a beverage, wrap the beverage in a napkin, and carry the beverage in your left hand.
- ◆ **Dining Etiquette:** Whether you are at a cocktail party, or at an event for a sit down meal, make sure to be aware of how you present yourself while eating. Stay away from messy foods that could cause you to stain your outfit, or worse, get something on someone else. Remember, you didn’t come to the event for the food, so don’t make it an all-you-can-eat buffet. Eat in moderation and take your time. Most important, never talk while you are in the midst of chewing.

- ◆ **Come Prepared:** Research your field of interest and, if you know the companies in attendance in advance, make sure you know something about them. Think about what types of things you would like to know and come prepared with some general questions you can ask people as you network. Also, do a self assessment on yourself to come up with things you would like to tell others about yourself. Having some general thoughts prepared before an event will help to take away some of the nerves and also make conversations a little easier.
- ◆ **Stay Organized:** Create a notebook or spreadsheet to track all the contacts you make. Include sections to record the contact's name, title, address, phone number, email, dates of contact, type of contact and notes. Keep all the business cards you receive together and even make notes on the back of them to help you better remember the person you spoke with later.
- ◆ **Follow Up:** Send a follow-up email to the contacts you met that you want to stay in touch with. After an event send notes to remind the new contacts of your conversation and to keep yourself on their radar. This is also a good time to request an informational interview or set up a lunch meeting to talk more.

Creative Ways to Brand Yourself

- ◆ **Volunteer Yourself to Be in The Spotlight:** One of the best ways to sell yourself to others is to become a subject matter expert and get out there and speak. Volunteer to be a speaker for an event or run for a position in a professional association. By not being afraid to be in the spotlight, you can let others see how knowledgeable and competent you really are.
- ◆ **Build Your Brand and Relationships through Technology:** Some great tools to use are LinkedIn, other social media sites such as Twitter and Google+, personal websites, e-mail newsletters, and blogs. On your website, you can post your resume and display examples of your work, testimonials, etc. Make sure you take time to decide what will be on your website and to update it regularly. Creating an email newsletter is another avenue to share your expertise and stay in touch with people. Take advantage of creating a professional blog where you can share your knowledge and thoughts with other people.
- ◆ **Give More, Take Less:** When you meet people spend more time getting to know them and find out how you can truly help them. Relationship building takes time. Help others before you ask them for anything. Once you have sincerely helped someone else out, it is only natural that they will want to know what they can do for you.

WHAT TO DO & NOT TO DO AT A NETWORKING EVENT

THUMBS UP BEHAVIORS	THUMBS DOWN BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Plan, plan, plan (and plan some more) ◆ Learn from experience ◆ Smile & maintain good eye contact ◆ Develop a good handshake ◆ Listen actively ◆ Mind your manners & rules of etiquette ◆ Be creative with your nametag ◆ Remember names the best you can ◆ Use humor appropriately ◆ Thank the host/hostess 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Drink too much; smoke ◆ Dress inappropriately ◆ Camp out at the food table ◆ Eat, drink and talk in any combination ◆ Talk too loud or argue ◆ Allow eyes to wonder off around the room while talking with someone ◆ Complain ◆ Correct someone in front of others ◆ Only talk & sit with people you know