

Networking: A Quick Users Guide

What is it and when can you do it?

It's essentially making and maintaining professional relationships. Once you are aware of the benefits of networking and how to do it well, you will realise that you are already doing it every day, with every encounter you have with people. Now you just need to be strategic and follow the guidelines listed below, to turn these encounters into professional opportunities.

Networking can lead to unadvertised job vacancy applications, recommendations, mentors, advice, introductions and referees - all by people already within your industry! Who better to get advice from regarding your industry than the industry itself!

Where can you network?

Networking is often viewed as two types, professional & Informal. Do not underestimate the opportunities of informal networking; its amazing the opportunities that can develop!

Professional:

Professional Industry Association (student membership), University Student Industry Association, Employer presentations, Careers Fairs & Industry networking events.

Informal:

Clubs & Societies – industry related or social, casual work, friends, family, family friends, your classroom! Rule of thumb is that any person you meet may give you an opportunity or vice versa. Because it could be ANYONE (student, staff, person you're sitting next to on the train) it's important to always present yourself well, by creating a **positive impression**.

How do you create a Positive Impression?

Creating a Positive Impression - The Essential 5 P's	
Present yourself in a:	
Polite	Polite manner with a
Positive	Positive outlook in all situations (including challenging ones), while remaining
Professional	Professional in your interactions and
Proactive	Proactive in your Responses and actions

How to talk & What to talk about?

The best advice is to attend one of our interactive CAGE workshops on Networking! Here are a few pointers to ensure you are going in the right direction:

How to talk:

How you speak is more important in making a first impression than what you are talking about, so relax!

- Be aware of your body language, relax, stand tall, smile, keep good eye contact & give a comfortable handshake!
- Everyone gets nervous, so keep an eye on your voice. The tone of your voice should be friendly and easy to listen to.
- It's a tricky combination, but you want to come across as 'yourself', but professionally. You can do this by following the above and keeping your language professional, but friendly and follow the 5 P Principals when you speak.

What to talk about:

- If you know who will be at an event, do some research beforehand so you have something to start the conversation with. If not;
- Keep up to date with what's happening in the Industry – through news, business section of newspaper and newsletters/articles. You don't need to be the expert – ask THEM how their organisation is working with the challenges, you may have the skills their looking for to match their strategic direction!
- Talk about why YOU want to be in the industry or get experience or work with a particular organisation, your ambition is very important and attractive to employers as long as you present yourself with the 5 P's!
- Check out our other guide on "Questions to ask potential Employers", for formal networking

Breaking the Ice:

Nervous? Timid to talk to potential employers? That's ok! Networking is not the time to allow your shyness to win. It takes practice and will power to improve. Practice talking to shop assistants, sales people – watch how they engage with new people and use this time to improve your skills.

1. Go and introduce yourself!
2. Small talk – everyone can do it!
3. Ask about them – or their organisation
4. Tell them why you are studying your degree – and why you are interested in their organisation
5. Include a short interesting story (maybe something while you were studying or on work experience or what led you to pursue this vocation) - Optional
6. Bring up something that you've read about and ask about it
7. End the conversation or allow others to join:
 - a. Thank them for their time and ask if you could send them an email – they may give their email address. ALWAYS follow up with a thank you within 24 hours, include something about yourself to jog their memory of you.

Never be afraid to end a conversation. You do not want to overwhelm the person with everything about you. Keep it concise with them wanting to know more! You are there to meet and mingle – if you don't have success with talking to someone, thank them and move on. You don't HAVE to have a full discussion with everyone you meet.

Online Networking:

Online networking is a great way to increase your networks and communicate with others in your industry. Should you use FACEBOOK to network?

No. What was the last thing you posted? What did you post in April 2007? What photos are you tagged in from Orientation week? Be aware of the image you are portraying through your photographs, comments and posts. As well as those of your Facebook friends. Can an employer see your history? Facebook is really an online diary, with photographs. It is common for Employers to check applicants online even over a period of time to ensure they represent themselves accurately. Keep Facebook for your friends!

Solution?

Choose a networking tool that allows you to separate your private and public image. Sites like LinkedIn, allow you to have a photo, list your skills, qualification and experience with the security of remaining professional. As employees move from job to job, you are able to remain in contact and their new networks can increase your own! If someone asks if you have Facebook or email, you can respond that you have a LinkedIn account. It's a great professional networking tool!