



Networking

What is networking?

Networking is a process of building relationships and sharing information with other people. When you are exploring a career or conducting a job search, learning from others in a particular industry, company, or job of interest to you is often the best way to learn about opportunities.

Successful networking requires time, preparation, and practice. It is an ongoing process that involves research and thought, and is **not** done only when job-searching. Networking is about developing connections and maintaining them. It is a mutually beneficial two-way process.

Identifying your network

Start with the people you know—your immediate and extended family, your friends and their family members, faculty and staff on campus, professionals you interact with (religious leaders, high school teachers). Expand to include Clark alumni and members of professional associations.

Don't limit yourself to people who work in fields of interest to you. Remember that all of the people you know have contacts in other fields and may be able to introduce you.

Reaching out

It's easiest to start with people who already know you. Ask to schedule a time to meet with them to get their advice on your career exploration or job search. Come prepared with a list of questions you hope to get answered. (Tips for conducting this type of informational interview can be found in the Career Services How to Guides: www.clarku.edu/offices/career) Ask people you know to introduce you to people in their network. Most people are happy to help and may even be flattered that you have asked for their input.

The Clark alumni community is another good source of networking contacts. Clark's LinkedIn page includes over 23,000 alumni searchable by major, company, industry, location, or other keyword. Go to www.clarku.edu/linkedin. Start by exploring the career paths of our alumni. Then send a personalized message to those with whom you'd like to speak. Clarkies are often very willing to help other Clarkies!

Reach out to professional associations in your fields of interest. Some will offer career mentoring; others will be able to connect you with someone for an informational interview. Association conferences and events are also good ways to meet professionals in a particular field.

Develop a "30-second commercial" about yourself to use as an introduction. Include your degree or academic preparation, areas of interest, strengths, and career goals.

Increasing your chances of getting a response

Always present your best self. First impressions are critical. Be sure your emails are polished, professional, and grammatically perfect. Always address people you do not know by Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name until they give you permission to do otherwise. When calling on the phone, speak clearly and succinctly. If you need to leave a message, recite your name and phone number slowly.



Never ask for a job. Your goal is to learn about the contact's career path and to listen to their advice. Ask informed questions and listen carefully to the responses; be willing to hear what is said.

Be persistent. Everyone is busy, so you may not get an immediate response. Emails can get lost in inboxes and phone messages can get deleted. Be sure to follow up at least once. If you don't get a response after sending an email and leaving a phone message, perhaps you need to move on.

Growing your network

Ask your contacts to introduce you to new people. This can extend your network, expose you to a variety of individual outlooks, and increase your visibility in an industry.

After any email, phone, or in-person contact, always send a thank-you email or handwritten note. Tell the person that you did the things they suggested and share any positive outcomes.

Develop a positive social media presence. Join career interest groups and respond to posts as appropriate. Follow companies of interest.

Network at alumni association events, job fairs, professional association meetings, seminars, and conferences. Attending events in your industry allows you to connect with experienced professionals and expand your knowledge base.

Stay in touch with your networking contacts. Connect to them on LinkedIn. Send an interesting article or note when something reminds you of the person. Offer to assist them in the future. Schedule follow-up times on your calendar so that you don't forget.

Attending networking events

Go with a goal in mind: What information or resources are you seeking? What types of people do you want to meet?

Present yourself professionally. Wear business clothing and an outfit that helps you feel your best. Be prepared. Bring pen and paper and a supply of business cards if you have them.

Before getting into conversations with people, take a few seconds to observe and center yourself. Quickly scan the room and decide on one or two people you want to meet.

Initiate a conversation by smiling, making eye contact, extending a handshake, and introducing yourself. It's easiest to approach a person standing alone or a group of three or more. Start conversations by talking about the event or asking the person questions about their professional background.

Circulate. Remember that your goal is to get quality contacts. Develop a strategy for exiting a conversation. Consider: "It was so nice to meet you. I need to catch up with some other folks/freshen my drink/find the restroom before the program starts." Be sure to exchange cards as you circulate. At the first opportunity, jot down some interesting points about the person on the back of their business card so that you can follow up.

Questions? For further assistance, please contact Career Services at cservices@clarku.edu.