Networking Guide

What is Networking
Networking is the process of connecting with people who work in certain fields, hold particular jobs or attend schools in which you might be interested. It allows you the opportunity to gather information, establish contacts and referrals, and acquire “inside” knowledge about a specific career, job type or graduate program. Networking is NOT asking someone outright for a job or internship – instead, it allows you the chance to become more focused in your career plan and understand the best way to enter that field. Networking can be done via phone, email or letter; however, the most effective way to network is generally in-person.

What Are the Benefits to Networking
The benefits to networking are numerous:

1. **You will learn what it’s really like to work in a specific career field or for a particular company.** You can, and should, research online to understand what a typical day for a high school teacher is like or what it would feel like to spend 12 hours a day working at a top law firm; however, speaking with someone who has that job or works for that company is the best way to get the real scoop on a career field and to determine whether or not you would enjoy it.

2. **It’s not what you know – it’s who you know.** Although this expression is not 100% accurate, contacts within a company or career field can open many doors for you. Networking allows you the chance to meet people and make connections that could someday hold the key to your dream job.

3. **Learn what it takes to be a success.** Networking allows you to hear the personal stories of how people succeeded in the exact career field that you are hoping to enter. These stories allow you to move beyond the generic “Desired Qualifications” listed on job descriptions and see what skills it really takes to be a success in a specific field.

4. **It really works.** Although statistics differ, surveys show that the majority of job hunters who successfully find a job credit their success to networking. As mentioned above, networking is NOT about asking for a job or internship. However, many opportunities are filled by candidates who heard about positions from “word of mouth” – not a job board. So the more you network, the more likely you will benefit from these “word of mouth” opportunities.

How Do You Identify People to Network With
Trinity’s large base of alumni/ae will prove to be a wonderful networking resource for you. To begin, join My Trin Net an online system that allows you to search for alumni/ae based on career field, employer name, location and a number of other variables. You are able to contact alumni/ae to ask questions and set up informational interviews. It is important to remember that My Trin Net is not a job-placement or job-leads service. Alumni/ae are not expected to provide you with referrals to job openings; rather, it is a resource for networking. To access My Trin Net, go to the Career Development Center’s website, click on the Students section and then the Networking tab.

Another resource for identifying networking contacts is www.LinkedIn.com. Once you have created a profile, you should join the Trinity College Career Development Center Group.

Before establishing accounts on My Trin Net and LinkedIn, you are strongly encouraged to meet with an adviser to talk about the most effective ways to utilize these resources.

Aside from Trinity Alumni/ae, other potential networking contacts include:
- Relatives
- Friends
- Friends of friends and family
- Professors and coaches
- Internship supervisors, co-workers and former co-workers
- Speakers at meetings you have attended

Consider what information each of these people could offer you. Hopefully, some of these contacts will work in the career field that you're targeting. If that is not the case, however, you should still utilize these personal connections to
identify other potential contacts. To do so, ask your personal contacts questions like, “Who would you recommend I contact about...?” or “I am interested in....Who do you know who...?”

**How Do You Contact Them**

After identifying those people you would like to contact, the next step is reaching out to them. Many times you will initially reach out to a contact via email. In your introductory correspondence, you should include:

- A short introduction of yourself
- Why you are writing to this person and your connection to them. For example, your connection may be a personal one (i.e. my Uncle Bob suggested I contact you) or it may be a more general connection (i.e. I attend Trinity and you also graduated from Trinity).
- A short explanation of your interests or experiences in the contact’s career field, company or location.
- And finally, a short statement about why you want to talk. Make it clear that you are asking him or her for information and advice - do NOT ask for an internship or job!

**Always proofread your email before sending it!** Just as you would with a cover letter or paper, make sure there are no misspellings or grammatical errors. If possible, bring your email to the Career Development Center for someone to review before you send it out.

**Sample email correspondence when reaching out to networking contacts for industry information:**

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am a Junior at Trinity College and understand that you also graduated from Trinity. I am interested in pursuing a career in environmental law and am writing to you because of your position as an attorney at one of the top environmental law firms in the country. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet or talk with you about your law school experience and about the field of environmental law more generally.

I am majoring in Environmental Science with a minor in Legal Studies. This semester I am also interning at the Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality. My coursework and internship experience have confirmed my interest in environmental law, and I plan on applying to law school following my graduation from Trinity.

I would like to arrange a time to discuss your background, experiences and any advice you could offer a student trying to enter this career field. I understand that your time is valuable, and I would be grateful for any advice you may have for me. I will call you within the week to follow up on this message. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Phone Number

**Sample email correspondence when reaching out to a networking contact regarding graduate school:**

Dear Professor Singer,

I am sending this email at the suggestion of your colleague Dr. James Hughes, who I have worked with closely at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. I am completing a Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy from Trinity and am planning to apply to PhD programs for the fall of 2014. I am very seriously considering Princeton’s Philosophy Department as an option, in no small part because you are currently conducting your research in bioethics at the same school.

Specifically, I am interested in studying how models of thinking about disability can color opinions about bioethics. As someone who has both studied academic bioethics and been active in the disability rights movement, I am very aware of the controversy your work has caused in that community. I would be extremely interested in studying the philosophical implications raised by these tensions in greater detail. I am wondering how much interaction you have with the philosophy department now that you are working out of the Center for Human Values? I notice that you have advised philosophy dissertations as recently as 2012. Is this something with which you are still involved?
Princeton is attractive more broadly because of its many strengths over an expansive curriculum. That is, I am looking for graduate programs in philosophy that will allow me to specialize in biomedical ethics, while still studying a wide range of the core areas of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and logic because my interest in disability theory's relationship to bioethics will probably take me into broader questions about moral philosophy, philosophy of science and political philosophy.

I have attached my CV for your reference and would be very interested in speaking with you about a possible fit at Princeton and to get your advice about who I should be speaking with about my interests in the Philosophy Department itself. Please let me know if you are able to give me some advice. I am available by telephone or email.

Respectfully,

Alexis Tyler

Aside from reaching out to contacts via email, the Career Development Center also offers you a number of ways to meet and network with Trinity alumni/ae face-to-face:

1. **On-campus Alumni/ae Panels and Visits**: Throughout the year, Career Development plans lunches, panels and presentations where alumni/ae return to Trinity to speak with students in a casual, small-group setting.

2. **Alumni/ae Practice Interviews**: Trinity alumni/ae return to campus to conduct practice interviews. They will simulate “real world” interviews asking questions that enable you to demonstrate your qualifications. These practice interviews are not only a wonderful way to network, but they also provide you with invaluable interviewing experience.

**How Do You Prepare for Networking Opportunities?**

**Before speaking with any potential contact, you need to do your homework. And just like when you write a paper, the first step is research:**

1. **Research yourself.** Identify your strongest skills and think about how they apply to a specific career field. Consider what factors are important to you in a career – is it being able to use your creativity; is it working in a team environment? To network successfully, you need to have a basic understanding of your own interests, needs and skills.

2. **Research potential contacts.** Before speaking with someone, you should know as much as possible about his or her career path, background and company. This research will provide you with a framework for networking. Use the Career Development Center resources to read about specific career fields and companies websites. The more information you have before networking, the more you will take away from the conversation. You will also impress the person with your knowledge and preparation.

3. **Create a list of questions to ask.** You do not want to appear as though you are reading from a script when networking, but you do want to make sure you have questions prepared ahead of time. You should prepare questions to ask about a person’s personal background and experiences, the company he or she works for, and the career field in general. Here are a few examples:

**Personal Background Questions:**
- What was your undergraduate major? How big a role did it play in your career choice?
- Did your college education provide sound preparation for this job? What would you have done differently at college to help you obtain and succeed in this job?
- What types of jobs have you held since graduation?
- How did you first get interested in this line of work? What has been your career path?
- What do you enjoy most and least about your work in this field and why?
- What is your typical day like? What kind of hours do you work?
- What skills do you use most on a daily basis?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- What kind of obligations does your work place upon you outside of the ordinary workweek?
- What accomplishments in your career have been most rewarding?
- Do you enjoy your job? Why?
- What sort of stresses are there in this job?
- What are your career goals for the future? What are the future career opportunities in this field?
Company Questions:
- How would you describe the work environment at ___?
- How does your organization compare with other organizations in this field?
- What is a typical career path in your company? Does your company offer any training programs?
- What is your organization’s mission?
- How is the hiring done at your company? What qualities are looked for in an applicant? What should I emphasize in my application materials? Whom would I contact about applying?

Career Field Questions:
- What credentials or educational licenses are required for entry into this kind of work?
- What kind of work experience would employers look for in a potential job applicant? How can I obtain this work experience?
- What are the most important characteristics and skills needed to be successful in this field?
- What changes have occurred or are occurring in your field?
- What is the best time of year to apply? What job search approaches or strategies do you suggest? What types of resume, cover letter or other materials are preferred by employers in the field?
- What are the typical jobs, particularly at the entry level? What is the salary range for these positions?
- What challenges do you see evolving in your industry?
- Can you recommend specific publications or resources that would be helpful for conducting research about this field?
- My strongest qualities are (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits). Where would they fit into this field?

You should also have a few final questions you can ask when you feel as though the conversation is wrapping up. Questions such as these provide you with a reason to keep in touch with a networking contact and help you build a relationship with a contact, rather than simply having a one-time conversation. Make sure to ask questions such as these at the end of your conversation and then follow-up on any and all suggestions provided.
- Could you refer me to resources that might help me learn more – professional organizations, etc?
- Would you suggest others who might be valuable sources of information or job contacts for me? May I have permission to use your name when I call or contact them?
- If you were me, what would you do next to pursue my interest in this field?

How Do You Behave During Networking Events or Informational Interviews

1. **Dress to impress.** If you are attending a formal networking event or visiting one of your contacts at his or her place of work, you should dress professionally – just as you would for a formal interview. Oftentimes when visiting a company, your contact may introduce you to colleagues so you want to make sure you look your best. Remember... “You never have a second chance to make a first impression.”

2. **Be on your best behavior.** Whether you are meeting someone face-to-face or speaking to him or her on the phone, you should always be polite and well-spoken. Remember that this person is taking time to speak with you, so you should be grateful and courteous. Even if this person is not in the specific career field that you’re interested in, you never know who this person knows or what type of resource they may be for you in the future. So make the best impression possible with everyone you meet.

3. **Use the research and questions you have prepared.** You’ve done your homework, so don’t forget to use it. Find ways to mention things you know about the job, company or industry during your conversation to illustrate that you are well-prepared and motivated. Also, ask some of the questions you have prepared – show the person that you are interested in what he or she has to say.

4. **Listen closely.** It is oftentimes easy to start thinking about your next question while the person is still answering your first one. Try to avoid thinking too far ahead and really listen to the information this person is providing you with – that is the point of networking! If you are speaking with a person on the phone, take notes. While it is important to maintain eye contact during face-to-face meetings, taking notes when possible shows that you are interested in what the person is saying. It also allows you to follow-up on some of the key points.

5. **Create a reason to stay in touch.** When networking, you want to establish a relationship – not simply have a single conversation. To create a reason to remain in touch, always ask your networking contact for suggestions regarding what else you should be doing – Who else should you speak with in the field? What publications and sites should you follow? Are there conferences you should be attending? By asking these types of questions
(and then following up on what he or she suggests), you provide a reason to keep in touch with your networking contact!

6. **Thank them!** At the end of every conversation – whether it is via the telephone or an in-person chat – thank the person for his or her time. No matter how well (or poorly) the conversation goes, you want the person to know that you are appreciative of his or her advice. If you are meeting in person, ask the person for a business card so that you can send a thank you note. If you are on the phone with that person, make sure you have his or her contact information before hanging up.

**Now What?**

**Send a thank you note!** Within 24 hours of speaking with someone, you should send a note thanking him or her for his/her time and advice. This is important for any business relationship - You never know if you will need assistance again, and you will leave an outstanding lasting impression. Here is an example of a thank you note.

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I greatly enjoyed speaking with you on June 19th about my interest in pursuing a career in advertising. I know that you are extremely busy, and I sincerely appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to speak with me.

Your advice on how to use my liberal arts education to enter the advertising field was extremely helpful. I have already begun to edit my resume and cover letter accordingly. It was also wonderful to hear about your day-to-day work as a creative director – it gave me a clear understanding of those skills necessary to succeed in this competitive field.

I will follow up with the contact you provided me and keep you updated on the progress of my job search. Our conversation was truly instructive and deepened my desire to pursue a career in this field. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

**Follow-up on all leads and contacts.** If your original contact referred you to someone else or another resource, make sure to follow-up on those leads quickly. It is important to show your original contact that you value his or her advice by acting on it promptly.

**Keep in touch with contacts.** As mentioned before, make sure to keep in touch with your networking contacts even after the initial conversation – let him or her know how the suggestions and leads they provided work out for you. Give your contacts updates as your job or internship search progresses – networking contacts are sincerely interested in what happens to you and your career.

**Conclusion:** Networking will prove to be a powerful tool throughout your career – not only when looking for your first job or internship. With proper preparation and follow-through, you will become a professional “networker” in no time!