



Networking Guide

Networking is simply interacting with other people to exchange information and **develop professional or social connections**. While networking can sometimes have a negative connotation, it is really just about connecting with people! Turn any negative thoughts about schmoozing or “using people” into positive thoughts about how your genuine love for others and your desire to build community can be of mutual benefit. Whether you are searching for your first internship or have already established your career, building connections is an important part of advancing professionally.

Who is in Your Network?

Your network consists of everyone you know. It also includes their connections. Some examples include:

- Family members
- Friends
- Professors
- Mentors
- Current and past supervisors
- Current and past co-workers
- Alumni from your high school or college
- Fellow church members
- People you know from community involvement
- People you know from interest clubs
- Recruiters



The Value of Networking

- Some human resource professionals claim that **70% of people landed their current jobs** due to networking. Other experts estimate that it is closer to 80% or 85%.
- Networking is a valuable part of the job search process because it allows you to gain knowledge about your desired career field while building relationships with people who could potentially open professional doors for you.

Networking Best Practices

- 1 Warmly introduce yourself and establish a connection.
- 2 Be prepared to ask questions so you can learn about the person and their professional interests.
- 3 Always be professional, whether interacting in person or online.
- 4 Follow up with new contacts and follow through on any of their recommendations or referrals.
- 5 Express your gratitude.
- 6 When the time comes, be a connector yourself and pay it forward!

Your Networking Toolbox

Every Northwestern College student and alumnus has a networking toolbox that includes at least six key elements:

1. **The Northwestern Network**
2. **Internships and jobs**
3. **Professionally focused social media sites like LinkedIn and Handshake**
4. **Informational interviews**
5. **Events**
6. **Staying in touch**

1. THE NORTHWESTERN NETWORK

Connect with alumni and friends of Northwestern College through the Northwestern Network. Start by making an appointment via Handshake with a staff member in the Compass Center. This staff member can ask you questions about your professional interests, suggest members of the Northwestern Network with whom you may like to connect, and help you take tangible steps to reach out to these people to learn more.

2. INTERNSHIPS AND JOBS

When you land an internship or a job, your goals should be to:

- Learn as much as you can—even if what you do every day is not something you love!
- Observe, ask questions and reflect.
- Do the kind of work that will yield an excellent reference.

After you finish the internship or job:

- Send your supervisor a thank you note.
- Ask your supervisor to serve as a reference for you in the future.

For more information about how to search for and succeed in an internship, make an appointment via Handshake with Kendall Stanislav, director of experiential education.

3. LINKEDIN AND HANDSHAKE

LinkedIn and Handshake are excellent ways to identify and connect with potential employers and professional mentors.

- Create a strong profile on both sites and then use these platforms to engage with others; a complete profile and active engagement make it easier for employers to learn about your professional skills and the strengths you could bring to their companies.
- Check out the Compass Center LinkedIn Profile Guide and the Compass Center Handshake Profile Guide for more tips on making the most of these networking tools.

4. INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are conversations you initiate to expand your network and learn about professional areas of interest. They may seem scary at first, but the professionals you ask to interview will be happy to share stories from their professional journeys. Don't be timid! Check out the Compass Center Informational Interview Guide for tips on how to reach out to someone who can provide firsthand knowledge about careers or companies.

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Your Networking Toolbox (continued)

5. EVENTS

Attend the kinds of events where you can meet new people and learn about job opportunities:

- Employer informational meetings, company tours, or recruiter-led workshops
- Internship/job fairs
- Alumni events
- Professional associations
- Professional seminars/workshops/panels
- Meetings for campus clubs or organizations
- Even social events that do not have a professional focus!

When attending networking events, remember:

- First impressions matter, so dress professionally.
- Be prepared to introduce yourself in a concise but meaningful way. Here is where you can put your elevator pitch to good use!
- Wear a nametag if that is an option.
- Do not come hungry. Eating is not your primary goal at a networking event.
 - Try to eat before the event so you can devote your time to meeting people and making connections.
 - If you have something to eat or drink, limit yourself to what you can hold in one hand so your other hand is free for shaking hands. You do not want to be trying to find a flat surface where you can put down your plate of food and beverage glass when you have the opportunity to meet someone new.
- Be ready to engage in small talk.

- Remember names—or type them as notes in your cell phone if you might not remember.
- If you have some, bring business cards to give to select people with whom you would like to stay connected.
- Follow up with people you meet at the event, ideally within 24 hours while you are still fresh in their minds. The best way to do this is to reach out to them on LinkedIn with a personalized message and a request to connect. They will be able to see your photo, thereby remembering you from the event. Also, you will have a better chance of staying connected with them long after they have left the companies listed on their business cards.

6. STAYING IN TOUCH

After you make professional connections with people, work hard to remain in touch. There are several ways to do this:

- After professional contacts have done something of service for you (let you conduct an informational interview with them, served as a professional reference, reviewed your resume, etc.), send a thank you note within 24 hours.
- Connect on LinkedIn.
- Follow-up on any referrals these contacts provide.
- Connect with them on a semi-regular basis via email, Twitter or LinkedIn so you stay fresh in their memories and can nurture the relationship. Use information or questions that are relevant to them as a connection point.

Never Stop Networking. When you land your dream job, do not stop networking. Continue building relationships with people who can be lifelong mentors, and always look for ways to share your expertise and connections with people who can benefit from your wisdom.