

## MAKE NETWORKING WORK FOR YOU

### WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Making personal connections and building relationships to obtain career or job search assistance.

### TYPES OF NETWORKING

- 1) **Face to face meetings** - either planned or accidental.
  - Always be ready to talk about your career interests. You don't know who you might be sitting next to on a plane or talking with at a party.
- 2) **Phone calls** – through referrals or cold calls.
  - People are often willing to take a call if they know the caller was referred by a friend or colleague.
  - Also, many professionals are happy to speak with cold callers about career issues providing there is no expectation of providing a job opportunity. Prior to making a cold call, be informed as much as possible about the person's position or company.
- 3) **Email** – there is a list serve or chat group for just about every topic on the planet.
  - Get connected to a list serve that addresses the issues related to your career interests. Start by being a reader only, this gives you a chance to identify knowledgeable members who you might want to email directly.
  - Avoid trying to make an impression on the group as a whole, become active participant gradually.

### GET ORGANIZED AND DEVELOP A NETWORKING LIST.

- Create a chart that lists the names of adults, their mailing and email address, phone numbers, and how you know them.
- Include every adult you know, almost everyone has connections and are happy to help
- Include contacts from professional associations, university staff or alumni

### IF CONTACTING SOMEONE BY PHONE, CREATE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOURSELF SO LISTENERS WILL KNOW YOUR INTERESTS, SKILLS, AND TYPE OF INFORMATION YOU ARE SEEKING.

- Keep it concise, about 30 seconds in length.
- Provide the listener with 3-4 key skills or knowledge you can offer an employer and 2-3 items about your training and/or experiences.
- Let them know why you're calling. For example:

Thank you for taking my call. John Smith suggested I contact you. Are you available to talk now for a few minutes? (if "yes", continue, if the answer is "no" be considerate and schedule a different time). I am a recent graduate from Elizabethtown College with a degree in Music Therapy. As part of my degree, I completed an internship at Sheppard Pratt Health System, in the pediatric inpatient division where I had the opportunity to conduct music therapy sessions, assess patients, develop and implement treatment plans and goals, and report patient progress to treatment team. I am calling you to get some information about organizations in the area that provide music therapy services to children and adolescents.

\* Jane, Check to see if you want to put in a drop down box with different samples for the web

### KNOW WHAT INFORMATION YOU ARE SEEKING.

- The information you seek determines whom you contact, the method of contact, and the types of questions you ask. Are you seeking information about a company? Contacts for a specific career field or geographic area? Regional business trends?

## **DEVELOP QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CONTACTS.**

- Do not ask “Do you have a job?” Your networking contact is not responsible for your employment status and it is a sure way to end a conversation and inhibit future interactions.
- Adjust your questions or the conversation depending on your relationship to the contact. Sample questions include:
  - What are the main challenges facing your organization (or the career field)?
  - What types of experiences/skills do employers like to see?
  - What do you most enjoy about your work or employer?
  - What do you wish someone had told you when you were starting out in this career?
  - Why did you choose this career?
  - Who would you consider to be key leaders for this industry in the local area?
  - What job resources or organizations do you think may be helpful for me to contact?
  - What changes do you anticipate in this industry in the next five years?
  - Is there anyone else that you think it might be helpful to contact? Can I tell them you suggested I give them a call?

## **MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NETWORKING**

- Always be professional and polite to everyone you meet. Dress professionally
- Never use a referral’s name without getting their permission.
- Be a good listener. You are talking with contacts to benefit from their knowledge. Contacts should feel valued and respected. This is not just about impressing others, it is your time to learn. Why would the contact help you if you act like a “know it all”?
- At a professional association event, get business cards. To aid you in remembering contacts, jot a note on the back of the card about your meeting or the event.
- Become an active member of a professional association related to your career interest.
- Check out online options. Online social networks like LinkedIn.com, Friendster.com, and Tribe.net. Employers like to hire candidates with strong social contacts. Don’t forget the Elizabethtown College alumni page.
- Be respectful of your networking contact’s time – limit your calls or meetings to 20 minutes. If it is a friend, you may want to take them to lunch. If you are calling, ask the contact if this is a convenient time to talk before you proceed.
- To practice your networking skills, start out by talking with close friends and family before you start contacting new referrals. This will help you to get comfortable with the process.
- Be prepared to explain your qualifications and to ask appropriate questions. You contacted the person so it is your responsibility to provide the framework for the conversation.
- Networking is not all about you. It is the give and take of an interaction that establishes a relationship. Make your meetings a conversation not a monologue or an inquisition. Keep the conversation going by sharing things you are studying in school. Make sure to smile, this is a great opportunity to gain more knowledge and to get to know someone in your field better.
- **ALWAYS**, write a thank you note and follow up with your contacts. Networking is about fostering relationships not making quick contacts and moving on. Keep your networking contacts up to date on your progress.

### **Resources:**

Cherie Kerr, *Networking Skills That Will Get You The Job You Want*, Betterway Books, Cincinnati, OH, 1999

Douglas Richardson, *Savvy Job Hunters Learn To Network Nicely*, *The Wall Street Journal Online*

Jeanette Borzo, *Online Social Networks Are Havens for Job Hunters*, *The Wall Street Journal Online*