

NETWORKING TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

Networking is a way to build professional relationships, and connect with others in your field. Networking with professionals in your field can be beneficial as you search for an internship or job. The following are tips on networking, both face-to-face and online.

Face-To-Face Networking

Keep your ears open for networking events that would make sense for you to attend. Many events can turn into networking opportunities (lectures or workshops, club meetings, even parties), so always be prepared to act professionally. You may also find networking opportunities through professional organizations and through family, friends, and Webster faculty and staff.

- Make a list of organizations that you wish to speak with. Research their missions, clients, and work prior to speaking with them.
- First impressions really do last. Shake hands with confidence. Use a firm—but not aggressive—handshake with both men and women. Try to be the first to extend your hand as a gesture of respect to the other person. Look the person in the eyes when you speak, and speak clearly.
- Introduce yourself to people, and use their names during conversation. Meeting people and talking about the field in which you are both interested is important when making connections. Also, people tend to enjoy talking about what they do and are usually flattered when someone shows interest in them. You will be able to tell if someone is uninterested in talking with you.
- Here are some ideas of what you could say during a networking opportunity (these may change depending on the situation):
 - My name is _____. It is nice to meet you.
 - I am excited to speak with you about _____.
 - I am very interested in _____ part of your organization.
 - My skills are in line with _____.
 - My experience is in the area of _____.

- How did you get involved with _____ club?
- Can you tell me a little bit about this organization?
- What made you decide to get involved with this company?

- Nametags are often used at networking events. They are typically worn on your right side, below the shoulder.

- Keep business cards with you at all times, but refrain from walking around and handing out business cards to everyone at the event. When you meet someone in your field, or from an organization in which you are interested, offer them your business card and ask for theirs.

- Remember to be polite and remain professional even if the atmosphere seems casual.

- Pay attention to your body language. You can say a lot without even opening your mouth. Be an engaged listener by maintaining eye contact, slightly leaning in toward the speaker, and nodding. Above all, remember to be natural.

- If you are carrying a drink with you during a networking event, keep it in your left hand in anticipation of shaking hands. You may want to partake of the food offered at the event, but remember that eating is not your primary objective and potential internship contacts may be watching. Eat politely.

- Closure is important for every conversation. Say goodbye or it was nice to meet you.

- After you meet someone with whom you'd like to stay in contact, jot down information about him or her (maybe on the back of their business card). This will be helpful for you to recall what the person looked like and what you discussed. This is especially important if you are meeting many people at the same time.

- Following up with people you've met is important. You can send a thank you note (a quick email is probably just fine) thanking them for taking time to talk with you. This email can also include information you said you would send them

(like a link to an interesting article, or a sample of your work) or a mention of something you discussed (such as, “I took a look at the article you recommended reading. It was very interesting.”)

- Unless requested, do not send your résumé or anything that would make it seem like you are taking advantage of someone’s position to get an internship/job. If you did talk about a potential internship/job opportunity, go ahead and follow up on that.

Online Networking Tips & Suggestions

Online networking can include many free social media tools, including but not limited to: LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Social networking tools allow you to connect on a personal and professional level, expanding the networks that you may currently have. Using social networking sites to meet people also allows you to find opportunities outside of your traditional network.

General Tips

- Introduce yourself online to professionals and peers. Meeting people and talking about the field in which you are both interested is important in making connections.
- For sites that have publicly viewable content, keep your content professional.
- Choose an industry-appropriate profile photo for sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and your online portfolio.
- Keep branding in mind; use the same profile photo on social media sites, and use similar background photos for those sites, if applicable. Keep colors and backgrounds similar to one another. The design in your resume, cover letter, business cards, etc. should be present in your online presence as well.
- Ensure that your username on various online networking sites is appropriate and representative of your personal and professional self. In the interest of branding, if possible use the same username for all professional sites.
- Remember to be polite and remain professional even in a casual online conversation with others.

Here are some ideas on ways to best utilize the networking functions of different social media platforms:

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional social networking tool for connecting with classmates; professors; internship mentors; and past, present, and potential employers. It is a chance to list your professional accomplishments and market yourself by networking with people in your field.

- Use the search box to narrow your networking search by location, company, or group. You may want to contact the human resources representative of an organization to attempt to set up informational interviews. Try to find people with whom you have a common connection. Be aware that analytics may reveal your browsing history.
- Use the search box to research the people who currently work for a company prior to an internship or job interview. View their skills and qualifications, and use similar keywords in your profile.
- Following up with people you meet is important. You can send thank you notes via the message function on LinkedIn, thanking them for taking the time to talk with you at a recent networking event or internship fair.
- Ask for recommendations from past employers (i.e., jobs, work-study positions, and internships) for the work you did at that organization.
- Ask your connections for endorsements on your skills and expertise; endorse other connections if you can attest to their listed skills and/or expertise.
- Link your LinkedIn profile to your online portfolio and all other applicable and appropriate social media pages.
- Remember to frequently update your profile and interact with others so that your role on LinkedIn is dynamic and engaging.
- Join groups that are relevant to your field. Interact with group members often.

Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging social media platform that allows users to update their followers and share content. Twitter has several significant advantages for professional networking, including the ability to follow companies and employees of those companies and the opportunity to interact with them on a professional level. Although Twitter allows for more informal conversation, keep in mind the public accessibility of Twitter and its content.

- Follow companies, organizations, and associations that align with your professional and personal interests.
- Interact with the companies and organizations you follow by retweeting (RT), sharing their updates, and replying to their content in a professional manner.
- Make sure to thank the professional connections that follow you and include brief closure in your professional conversations.
- Utilize the hashtag (#) function when making reference to companies and organizations to explicitly show your interest in the work they do. Remember to keep content professional and appropriate.
- Align content with your interests; keep branding in mind.
- Remember that the ways in which you brand yourself personally and professionally on Twitter can determine the effectiveness of your networking.
- Add the URL for your online portfolio as your website on the info section on your Twitter page.

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking platform that allows members to interact with others on a personal and professional level. Keep in mind the public accessibility of Facebook and if your content is public, be sure to keep it appropriate and professional.

- Like the pages of companies, organizations, and associations that align with your professional and personal interests. Comment on status updates and share content on your Facebook timeline. Keep replies professional.
- Join groups that align with your interests, and network with members of those groups. Keep replies professional.

- Use an industry-appropriate profile photo; make sure your cover photo is similar to the background and/or images used on other social profiles and your online portfolio.
- Make your Facebook “About” section similar—if not identical—to the information used on your Twitter profile and your online portfolio bio.
- Add the URL for your online portfolio as your website under the “About” section.
- Separate personal and professional contacts into lists. Customize your privacy settings so that only preapproved lists can view albums, status updates, and tags.

Be aware that all public social profiles have the potential to be viewed by prospective employers. Keep content professional, and be sure to use search engines to monitor and maintain an appropriate social presence.

1.4.13