

Networking

What is networking?

It is a process of exchanging information between you and another person that involves establishing relationships. These relationships can be with people who will often become your friends, coworkers, or community colleagues as you move through your career.

Why network?

- Learn about career and job opportunities
- Make valuable connections who can assist you in the future (you can help them, too)
- Strengthen communication and professional skills
- It's critical for today's job seekers and a top employment search strategy

Networking steps

□ Develop a list of contacts

- Who do you already know? e.g., family, friends, co-workers, professors, advisors, professionals. etc.
- Attend community or networking events that include your career or personal interests/hobbies, e.g., career fairs, volunteer events, club/organization meetings, etc.

□ Get prepared

- First impressions count; be aware of how you communicate and act.
- Prepare your elevator pitch and be ready to discuss your career interests.

□ Initial outreach

- *Start with an email or LinkedIn message.* Since most professionals are quite busy, these are usually the preferred modes for initial contact.
 - Follow us on LinkedIn: Stark State Career Services Office
- *Be clear.* Always indicate how you obtained the individual's information. Mention your interest in learning about their profession or organization.
- *Lend context.* Provide a brief overview of your background so a new contact can best tailor their advice. Do not attach your resume unless you are asked for it.
- *Manage phone contact.* If phone contact is necessary, be prepared to leave a short voicemail.
- *Arrange an informational interview* to gain further insight into occupations, opportunities and organizations. Your primary goal is to gather information and get advice, while making a positive impression. See if you can meet at the contact's place of employment so you can do on-the-ground research.

□ **Ask for referrals.** The person you are networking or meeting with likely will have additional contacts within the same industry or field – continue to build your connections.

□ **Follow up!** Send a thank-you email within 24 hours from the informational interview. Mention at least one piece of advice they gave you and how you will pursue their recommendations further. Stay in touch by scheduling regular phone calls or meetings with your contacts to maintain your relationship.

More networking tips

- Doing an internship/co-op can help you with networking and building relationships.
- Visit Stark State's Career Services to learn about upcoming networking events and career fairs.

Sample email or LinkedIn networking message

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am majoring in _____ at Stark State College and was given your name by _____. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you to learn more about how you entered the field, as well as gain some insight into the profession.

Do you have a few minutes to speak with me either in person or on the phone about your career and background? I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
(Use full name and appropriate contact information.)