Networking, whether social or professional, is about building and maintaining relationships. Your professional network may provide you with the means to tap into the hidden market of unadvertised jobs and internships. Creating a network can be intimidating when you feel as though you have no professional connections. At first, networking can seem unnatural. However, being prepared can alleviate the fear associated with networking.

**Building Your Network**

**Network Preparation**

- Know the key players in your industry, including individuals, employers, and current trends
- Understand that rejection is not a reflection of who you are and should not be taken personally

Confidence will be built with each positive response; persistence will be gained with each negative response. With the two working in conjunction with each other, you are well on your way to becoming a networking pro!
Cultivating Current Contacts

Many students believe they have no place to start because they have no direct links to professionals in their field of study. This is simply not true. As a student you have access to an excellent source of contacts: professors! In addition to professors, you can cultivate contacts within your:

- Immediate and extended family
- Friends or neighbors
- Social clubs and organizations
- Campus clubs and organizations
- Church, synagogue and religious groups
- Professional associations
- Alumni and classmates
- Former employers, supervisors and co-workers

Cultivating New Contacts

The contacts you already have can be extended to secondary contacts. This will include those you may not know directly, but through someone who knows them. In addition, if you have not already done so, cultivate new contacts from the preceding list.

Building a Strong LinkedIn Profile

- Use keywords in your qualifications summary. Many employers search by keyword, e.g. technical terms and skills from your field. Not sure what your best keywords are? Find profiles of people who hold the job you would like to get and see which keywords they use.
- Write short text. Describe your skills and abilities in short bursts of keyword-rich text. Use bullets to separate information.
- List all your experience. LinkedIn helps you connect with former colleagues and networking contacts who may be able to help you find a job opportunity. It also gives employers a description of your expertise.
- Ask for recommendations and collect one or two from someone at each organization where you have worked. Do not forget to get recommendations for internships you have completed.
- Refresh your news. Frequently update your status about major projects you have completed, books you are reading, and professional successes you have had. This lets your professional contacts know what you are doing and serves as a sign of activity for potential employers.

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Developing a Strategy and Approach

In networking, you can take either a direct or indirect approach. The direct approach is to contact your network lead in person or by telephone. The indirect approach is to send a letter by either mail or e-mail.

Depending upon your individual style, either approach can be successful within some basic guidelines:

- Be genuine, confident, positive, and enthusiastic in all communications.
- When you approach a contact by either telephone or letter, know the questions you want to ask and decide in advance how to ask them. Do you want to know:
  - more about that person’s type of field or career path;
  - what types of employees the person’s firm hires; and/or
  - about the requirements for a posted opening at the person’s firm?
- When you are calling a cold contact, write down what you would like to say on a card or piece of paper and keep it handy just in case you get nervous and forget your lines.
- Ask your contact if you may forward your résumé to him or her and, if the contact says yes, send it promptly, along with a cover letter referring to your conversation.
- Before you end a conversation with a cold contact, make sure you have the correct spelling of his or her name, the correct job title, telephone number, mailing, and e-mail addresses.

Keeping the Details Straight

In your effort to cultivate networks, you will begin to develop numerous relationships. It is vital to maintain these relationships. In order to keep your contacts organized, it is best to keep a manual or electronic log including the following:

- Correct spelling of first and last name
- Title, employer, address, telephone, and e-mail
- Priority of contact (high, medium, low)
- Dates when contact is made and nature of contact

Following Up

After you make a connection with a contact, be sure to send a thank you letter. This will indicate your appreciation of their time and maintain the relationship. On a weekly basis, check your network log and make contact with those individuals with whom you have not connected in a while. If your contact gives you additional names of individuals, make sure to connect with these leads as soon as possible.

Check out the example of a networking letter on page 41. It can be adapted for an e-mail as well as a phone conversation.
Networking / Contact Tree

Cousins
Uncles
Aunts
Brothers
Sisters
Parents
Spouse
Family
Neighbors

Members of:
Social clubs
Church
Synagogue
Religious group
Service club
Professional association
Labor unions
Other groups

Friends
Family
Youth group leaders
School/ alumni
Classmates
Friends of friends
Friends
Teachers
Employers
Former employer
Work associates
Supervisors
People you have done business with
Others, i.e. lawyers, doctors, bankers, secretaries, receptionists, custodians, etc.
A Networking Letter (or E-mail)

Structure this letter along these lines:
• Make a connection between you and the reader — (e.g., mutual acquaintance, similar background, etc.).
• State your purpose without pressuring the reader. Explain your situation briefly.
• Request a meeting at a mutually convenient time, and indicate that you will call to make arrangements.

Hundahl, Jennifer

From: hdmartin@hotmail.com
Sent: Monday, September 20, 2012
To: jhundahl@fiserv.com
Subject: Brief Meeting
Attachments: Hayden.Martin.Resume.docx

Dear Ms. Hundahl:

Dr. Douglas K. Agbetsiafa, professor of economics at Indiana University South Bend, suggested that I contact you. He thought that, as an alumna, you would be in an excellent position to assist me with a career decision.

As an economics student, I am exploring which career path to pursue. Work in securities, trading, and investment banking all sound interesting to me at this point, but I want to go into my campus interviews next semester with a clear sense of direction. I would like to get your advice on the long-term implications of each path as well as a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of a broker.

I shall call you next week to see if we can arrange a brief meeting at your convenience. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Hayden D. Martin
hd martin@hotmail.com
(574) 555-2508
