



Networking 101 – Tips to help learn how to become an expert networker

Networking is a great low-pressure way to learn about an industry, a company, and ultimately about yourself. You'll find that many people like telling their story and using their experiences to help others, especially when they're not feeling pressured to "offer a job." You'll also learn that a good media professional never stops networking because a good media professional should never stop growing and learning. Follow these tips to help learn how to become an expert networker.

Going in blind

Generally speaking, networking happens through direct reach-out to people you want to learn from, or at networking events and conferences.

Networking events: if you don't know anyone at the networking event, have some introductory type questions ready. Be prepared to say some relevant things about yourself. Join in with a group of people talking. Look around the room and if someone is standing alone, introduce yourself. Everyone in the room is a potential new career connection, or friend.

Know that most people in the room are uncomfortable networking. Once you break the ice with someone, it becomes easier to have a good conversation. Make a goal to speak with a certain number of people, and follow-up.

One-on-one conversations: Connect with people on LinkedIn but send a personal, direct note. See if your current contacts have 1st degree connections to people you want to speak with. Ask your parents, your friends, and anyone who might know someone. Don't be shy, just be direct and honest. Say "I'm not looking for a job, I just want to learn more about your company and you."

Prepare to be great, and grateful

Prepare to talk about yourself, and not that you want a job. (that part everyone already knows). Come up with a one or two "pitch" sentence that sums you up. "Hi, I'm Mary, an entertainment and media executive at Pace University and I've really become passionate about pursuing marketing and advanced advertising." And then be prepared to talk about why you want what you want and think about how the people you talk to can help you get closer to achieving that goal.

On the flip side, do your homework. Research who you're talking to, and the company they work for. Prepare questions based on their current role, and past roles. Always remember to be grateful for this opportunity.

Prepare to talk about yourself, but also LISTEN

Be sure to develop your listening skills. Don't just wait for someone to stop speaking so you can talk. People will pick up on this and will likely move away from you. It can come off as your uninterested in what they're saying, and you only want to talk about yourself. Big turnoff.

Be easy on yourself

Networking takes the pressure off. Instead of asking for a job, you're asking for advice.

Be persistent but not TOO persistent

Some people will be super responsive, and some won't. This doesn't mean they don't want to help. It could be that they're just too busy. Send a note, and if they don't response, wait a week and send a follow up. If you don't hear anything, just move on to someone else.

Keep your expectations in check

You may not get a response, or you may have your meeting canceled and never rescheduled. That's ok. Move on to someone else.

What happens after I meet with someone?

Send a thank you email. Ask them if it's ok to reach out if you have questions about opportunities. If you see a job opening that's at their company, that's your "in!" Email them with the link to the posting and say you saw the posting and would love to talk to the appropriate person. But again, remember to keep your expectations in check.

Questions you should ask

What was your career path from university to your current role?

What is the best part of what you do?

How have you dealt with disruption in your career path?

What do you look for when bringing in new team members?

How do I stand out in the workplace?

What traits do new recruits typically have?

What's the competition like to get in?

Should I go to grad school for a better chance to attract more employers?

What do you read/watch to keep up with current events in the industry and the world?

Do you have a favorite book on leadership?

What is the one essential skill that will help me succeed in any job?

How do I deal with difficult work/internship colleagues?

Who do you admire in the industry and why?

I'd like to ask more career advice questions. What is the best way to connect with you?

What do you binge watch?

What keeps you up at night - as it pertains to your current role?

What is your dream job?

What's the best career advice you've ever received?

What's an important lesson you've learned along the way?

What helped you get to where you are today?

What is a piece of business advice that you would pass on to others?

How did you break into your first job in media?

What are the strengths that make you great at your job?

How important is it that I know my career path right after college?

What do you find most challenging in looking for new opportunities?

What advice would you give your younger self, just coming out of college?