



United Nations

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TAKING CONTROL OF  
YOUR CAREER

BUILDING CAREER  
CONNECTIONS

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## Part 2: Career Tools

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## ACTIVITY 4: Building Career Connections

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Decide to network  
Use every letter you write  
Every conversation you have  
Every meeting you attend  
To express your fundamental beliefs and dreams  
Affirm to others the vision of the world you want  
Network through thought  
Network through action  
Network through love  
Network through spirit  
You are the center of a network  
You are the center of the world  
You are a free, immensely powerful source  
of life and goodness  
Affirm it  
Spread it  
Radiate it  
Think day and night about it  
And you will see a miracle happen:  
The greatness of your own life.  
In a world of big powers, media, and monopolies  
But of [nearly seven] billion individuals  
Networking is the new freedom  
the new democracy  
a new form of happiness.  
— Robert Muller  
Former Assistant Secretary General  
United Nations

*Networking is fast becoming not just a helpful tool for career success,  
but also an essential skill for career survival.*

— Michelle Tullier, PhD  
Networking for Success, 1998

### What Is Involved in Building Career Connections?

- ◆ Meeting and exchanging information with people in a particular career field.
- ◆ Developing alliances and fostering contacts for mutual benefit, starting long before a job search begins.
- ◆ Knowing and contacting accessible, knowledgeable people to ask for their advice, explore options, and obtain leads for other contacts.

Building connections can help you:

- ◆ Gain greater perspective about the work unit and position you are interested in.
- ◆ Keep current with trends and personalities in your field of interest.
- ◆ Learn about unpublished forthcoming job opportunities.
- ◆ Be referred to an opportunity you did not know about.
- ◆ Increase your base of contacts.

### Who's in Your Network Now?



**Instructions:** Answer the following questions. You can enter as much text as you want.

**1. How you have built your professional network so far? What has worked for you?**

Your response

**2. Who have been the most helpful connections so far in terms of your career?**

Your response

**3. "Superconnectors" are people who have a wider than usual circle of personal and professional contacts. Do you know any Superconnectors? If so, enter their names.**

[Click here to enter names.](#)

## Ways to Expand Your Connections

Making connections can be a challenge, but it's one you can learn to overcome. Some of the obstacles can be:

- ◆ Finding and setting aside time to work on expanding your circle of contacts.
- ◆ Not having a plan of action and a schedule for implementing it.
- ◆ Being shy in new settings or with new people.
- ◆ Having trouble identifying and expressing your strengths and capabilities.
- ◆ Reaching out to people beyond your "comfort zone."
- ◆ Being uncomfortable making "cold calls" or contacting people who haven't met you before.
- ◆ Expecting others to do the work for you.
- ◆ Not following through; not showing up or calling when you say you will.

There are many strategies you can use to expand your personal and professional connections. Some of the most effective ones are to:

- ◆ Be generous to others. The more people you help, the more help you will receive.
- ◆ Find a "superconnector."
- ◆ Find a mentor.
- ◆ Ask your manager to help you connect to other people in your field of interest.
- ◆ Try out new activities; reach out to new groups.
- ◆ Actively participate in Communities of Practice.
- ◆ Ask your connections for referrals.
- ◆ Develop connections with people outside your normal group of friends and colleagues.
- ◆ Show up for social or other informal office events.
- ◆ Don't eat lunch by yourself.
- ◆ Strike up a conversation with everyone you meet in the workplace; try to find a common interest.
- ◆ Establish a presence on social media, such as [Unite Connections](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#). Search these sites for possible contacts.



## Informational Interviewing



Informational interviewing involves speaking with people to find out and get advice about a particular career. The goal of informational interviewing is to find out how to get in to your field of interest, what it's like to work in it, and whom else you might speak to.

### Initiating an Informational Interview

Often, individuals have questions about how to initiate a networking conversation. It is important to both introduce yourself and state what kind of information you are seeking. There are many things you can say to introduce yourself to someone and present yourself in a positive light.

#### Tips for Contacting a Referral<sup>1</sup>

- ◆ Identify yourself.
- ◆ Tell the person whom referred you.
- ◆ State the purpose of your call and how the contact can be of assistance.
- ◆ Give a 1-minute statement on your background.
- ◆ Assure the person that you are *not asking him or her for a job* but just looking for information.
- ◆ Give the contact an estimate of how long the interview will last.
- ◆ Ask the person whether he or she would prefer to meet in person, online or by phone. If at all possible, try to meet face-to-face.
- ◆ Schedule a time for the conversation which is convenient for the contact even if it means you need to shuffle other commitments.
- ◆ Offer to take the person for coffee if he or she would prefer to meet off the premises or outside of work hours.
- ◆ Thank the referral for their time and willingness to meet with you.

### Conducting an Informational Interview

Beforehand, create a list of specific questions to ask (see the next section).

At the outset, reiterate that you are not asking the contact to give or find you a position; you would like to learn from his or her experience.

Take notes.

Respect the person's time; don't take longer than you originally predicted.

Ask for the names of two or three other people who you might talk to.

Leave the door open for future contact and then keep the person informed of your progress.

Thank the person for their time and support both at the end of meeting and in writing afterwards.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Power Networking* by Donna Fisher and Sandy Vilas, 1992.

## Questions to Ask in an Informational Interview

Before you meet with anyone, formulate specific questions you want to ask. Even though you might not ask each one and/or the conversation may move in other directions, it's good to have such a list to help get things started or back on track. Remember, you're the one who set the meeting up so you're the one responsible for running it.

Some suggestions are:

1. What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?
2. How much and what type of training did you have when you moved in to *[the field or role]*?
3. What type of experience would be the most helpful to have before working in *[this field or role]*?
4. Do I have any gaps or weak points in my qualifications for the position I am considering?
5. From what you know of me at this point, is there anything which looks like a "plus" (an unusual asset) that might help me transition to the position I am interested in?
6. Would it be realistic for me to apply for *[the type of position you want]* now or might I be getting ahead of myself?
7. Are there any other people who know about *[the field or role of interest]* who you might refer me to?
8. Do you know anyone with a contact in *[the department or field of interest]*?
9. May I use your name when I call *[the referral]*?
10. From what you see of my experience up to now, what do think might be my logical next step?

## Getting Ready for Your Interviews



**Instructions:** Answer the following questions and fill out the table. You can enter as much text as you want.

4. **Write a 3 – 5 sentence introduction of yourself to use when you contact someone for an informational interview.**

Type your introduction.

## 5. Who will you contact to set up an informational interview and by when?

Name	Contact Information	Date
1. Enter a name	Phone number and email	Date
2. Enter a name	Phone number and email	Date
3. Enter a name	Phone number and email	Date
4. Enter a name	Phone number and email	Date
5. Enter a name	Phone number and email	Date

### Tips for Shy Individuals<sup>2</sup>

- ◆ Take baby steps. Your confidence will build slowly with each positive experience.
- ◆ Don't assume you're being a pest. Most people will be glad to hear from you.
- ◆ Remember your "prouds"—the times you have been successful.
- ◆ Enlist a spokesperson. Consider having another person act as a go-between for you.
- ◆ Open the interview with a question to get a conversation going.
- ◆ Remember that most people like to talk about themselves and feel that they have something to share with others.
- ◆ Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Think through what you want to say in advance and practice with a friend.
- ◆ Attend events. Start out with short stays and gradually stretch them.
- ◆ Set a goal to meet 3 new people at each event.

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<sup>2</sup> From *Networking for Everyone* by L. Michelle Tullier, 1998.



## Additional Resources

### Books

- ◆ *Never Eat Alone*, Keith Ferrazzi, Doubleday, 2005.
- ◆ *Networking for Everyone! Connecting with People for Career and Job Success*, Michelle L. Tullier, JIST Works, 1998.
- ◆ *Secrets to Winning at Office Politics*, Marie G. McIntyre, St. Martin's Griffin, 2005.
- ◆ *What Color is Your Parachute?*, Richard A. Bolles, Ten Speed Press, 2006.



### LinkedIn Learning

- ◆ [Professional Networking](#)
- ◆ [Giving Your Elevator Pitch](#)
- ◆ [Jodi Glickman on Pitching Yourself](#)

### Videos

- ◆ "It's Who You Know," T. J. Duane, Stanford Graduate School of Business, 29-April-2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzpYBTeZdWw> (9:42 minutes).
- ◆ "Networking Tips to Advance Your Career," Linda Spencer, Harvard Extension, 29-Jan-2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFwj\\_vAq9c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFwj_vAq9c) (2:49 minutes).