

NETWORKING

Approximately 75% of available jobs are never advertised. Instead, these positions are filled through networking, which is one of the most effective means of finding employment and tapping into the “hidden” job market. Networking involves building and maintaining professional relationships as a way to mutually share information and advice.

Networking FAQ

Why is networking important?

- Networking is essential for:
 - Exploring career fields
 - Identifying leads in your job search
 - Building and managing your career over time

How do I get started?

- Be yourself.
- Initiate conversations with people you interact with on a regular basis.
- Ask people about their career paths or if they can offer any advice.

Who do I contact?

- Brainstorm a list of anyone and everyone you know!
- Never underestimate how valuable each person’s assistance might be or what connections they may be able to help you make.

When should I start networking?

- Networking is a continual process that you can start NOW.
- Get into the habit of talking about your future career goals with people you meet.

Step-by-Step Networking

1. *Develop a “networking statement” that you will use when introducing yourself to new contacts.*
 - Clearly identify your educational background and the type of position(s) you are seeking.
 - Example: “I am a recent graduate of Calvin College, where I majored in business and completed an internship in the marketing department at (Name of Company). I’m interested in finding a position in sales or marketing, where I can use my strengths in communication and problem-solving.”
 - Practice your “networking statement” with family, friends or a career counselor.
2. *Generate a networking list.*
 - Include: friends, family, Calvin alumni, current and past supervisors and co-workers, classmates, teammates, professors, neighbors, advisors, church members, acquaintances and members of professional associations.
 - Add individuals to your networking list as you meet them or as others recommend.
3. *Organize your networking list.*
 - Group A: People you personally know who may have the ability to put you in contact with professionals working in your field or in organizations of interest to you. (These are the people you will want to contact first, in order to practice and gain confidence in your networking skills).
 - Group B: People who are working in your field of interest and have been referred to you by your Group A contacts.
 - Group C: People who have the authority to hire you for the type of work you are seeking, if an opening exists. You may know these people personally, or your Group A and B contacts will refer you to them.

4. *Begin contacting your networking list face-to-face, by phone or by e-mail.*

- If you do not personally know the individual you are contacting, introduce yourself and identify the person who made the referral (e.g., “Dr. Smith, professor at Calvin College, suggested that I contact you”).
- Share your “networking statement.”
- Ask the individual if he or she has any **advice** to offer related to entering a career in your field of interest. Ask about his or her career path.
 - *Remember, networking is not only about attempting to find a job; it is an ongoing process of building relationships and exchanging information. Throughout the process, be aware of ways in which you might assist others. (It’s not just about you).*
- Ask if he or she knows of any openings for which you are qualified.
- Ask if he or she knows anyone else you should contact.

5. *Keep records.*

- Organize your networking list into a database. Include names, titles, company names, and contact information.
- Keep track of your correspondence with each person on your networking list.

6. *Follow-up.*

- Write a brief thank you note to each person who offers advice and provides leads.
- Keep the individuals on your networking list informed of your job search progress, and keep in touch once you accept a position.

Expanding Your Network

In addition to completing the steps outlined above, you can also naturally build your list of networking contacts by doing the following:

- Utilize online networking tools, such as LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) or uKnight for Calvin alumni (www.calvin.edu/alumni).
- Volunteer in the community.
- Join a club, organization or professional association.
- Attend workshops and seminars related to your career objective.
- Participate in career fairs and other events sponsored by the career development office.
- Take advantage of unexpected encounters and initiate conversations with others while standing in line at the store, sitting in a waiting room or other locations conducive to casual conversation.

Other Networking Resources

The following books provide additional networking tips and are available in the Career Resource Center (2nd floor of Hekman Library):

- *Networking for Job Search and Career Success* by Michelle Tullier
- *The Networking Survival Guide: Get the Success You Want by Tapping Into the People You Know* by Diane Darling
- *Power Networking: 59 Secrets for Personal and Professional Success* by Donna Fisher and Sandy Vilas