Building Your Network

What Does it Mean to Network?
Networking refers to the process of connecting with people and building relationships. It’s about meeting new people, sharing information, and learning about potential opportunities and various career fields.

Networking Can Lead To Opportunities
Employers fill the majority of job openings through the unadvertised, or hidden, job market – and your network is essential to finding these opportunities. The contacts you make, if cultivated and used wisely, can lead to future employment.

Where Do I Begin?
Many students are concerned because they erroneously believe that in order to network they need to know people in positions of power who can ultimately offer them a job. The fact is that everyone has a network; it’s just a matter of thinking broadly and creatively about who is in it. There is a good chance that either someone you know (or someone they know) works in a field that interests you. Start with making a list that includes:

- Friends, classmates and peers
- Family
- Neighbors
- Present or former teachers
- Present or former employers/co-workers
- Members of organizations to which you belong
- Professional acquaintances
- Counselors
- Alumni
- Religious affiliations

Where Do I Network
Everywhere!
Think about all of the places you go to interact with people:

- Career Fairs, Panels, Networking Nights
- Social Networking Sites/LinkedIn
- Classes/Conferences/Seminars
- Work/Volunteer Meetings/Social Gatherings
- Professional Associations
- Every interaction can create the opportunity to engage with a variety of people.

Career Center events are listed in Handshake

Career Tip: Be in the know and sign up for CareerMail in Handshake

Berkeley Career Network
The Berkeley Career Network makes professional connections for Cal students and alumni. The network recommends new connections for you based on shared industries, majors, and professional interests.

It’s easy for students and alumni to tap into the Cal community by sending messages and requesting online or in-person meetings based on their professional interests and goals.

Join the community at https://berkeley.peoplegrove.com/
One of the BEST ways to learn more about a job or industry is to talk to someone who is currently working in that industry or job. [Informational Interview - noun: Informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you who is willing to give you information about a job, career field, industry, or work setting. It is not a job interview, and the objective is not to find job openings.]

1. Identify people to interview. Here’s how:
   - People you already know, even if they aren’t in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, peers, GSIs, professors, former employers/coworkers, etc.
   - Search LinkedIn for professionals including alumni in a specific role, or in a specific industry you’d like to know more about.
   - Use the @cal Career Network to identify Cal alumni who will talk to you about their careers.
   - Attend networking events and seminars to identify possible contacts.

2. Initiate contact
   - Contact the person by email, phone, or letter.
   - Mention how you got their name (e.g., let them know if a mutual acquaintance referred you, Cal alumni network, LinkedIn, etc).
   - Emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job, and that you are flexible with scheduling and time.

3. Prepare for the interview
   - Develop a 30 second overview to introduce yourself, including your reasons for contacting this person. Plan open ended questions to keep conversation flowing rather than questions that call for yes/no answers.

4. Conduct the informational interview (Phone or in-person)
   - Dress appropriately for in-person meetings, as you want to make a positive impression even though this is not a job interview.
   - Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
   - Take notes if you like, ask for a business card, and ask for suggestions of other people to talk to.

5. Follow-up
   - Send a thank-you note within 1-2 days to express your appreciation.
   - Keep in touch. Mention that you followed up on their advice and tell them how things are going. This relationship could become an important part of your professional network.

Sample Inquiry:
Dear Ms. Jones:
I am a junior majoring in Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley and spoke with you briefly at the Cal Career Fair in September. Although I am not currently looking for a job, I am very interested in learning all I can about careers in the field of public policy and what skills I might make a point of developing during my last year at Cal. I would greatly appreciate 15 to 20 minutes of your time to ask you a few questions about your role as Health Policy Analyst with the City of Berkeley, as well as other types of work in the field. Thank you for your consideration. I will contact you next week to arrange a convenient time to meet with you.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Possible Questions:
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What are common entry-level jobs in this field?
- Can you tell me about your career journey, and what led you here?
- What are the rewards/challenges/frustrations of your work?
- What tips or advice do you have for a college student interested in this company/industry/line of work?
- What are the most important skills or qualities necessary to be a successful entry level candidate at this field/in this industry?
- What steps should I take to prepare to enter this field?
- Where do you see growth or change in this industry?
An effective network is well organized and maintained over time. Use the space below to brainstorm 3 contacts in your network that you plan to contact as a next step. Include the name of the contact, date of initial conversation, when you plan to follow up, and highlights of the conversation.

Contact: ___________________________________________ Date: ______________________________

Follow-up: __________________________________________________________________________

Notes: ______________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Contact: ___________________________________________ Date: ______________________________

Follow-up: __________________________________________________________________________

Notes: ______________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Contact: ___________________________________________ Date: ______________________________

Follow-up: __________________________________________________________________________

Notes: ______________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Social Media’s purpose is to:

1. Gain An Audience
2. Create Content
3. Make Connections

**Gain An Audience**
Your involvement on social media can contribute to your online presence, so keep it clean. Ask yourself:

- “Who is on the other end of my messages?”
- “Is this how I want to present myself to the world?”

**Create Content**
Focusing on relevant content and trends will contribute to both your social media presence and professional growth. Use social media to engage in conversations relevant to your industry interest and expand your knowledge. Ask yourself:

- “Have I linked my blog or portfolio to showcase my skills?”
- “Am I engaging in conversations or sharing content related to my industry on social media?”

**Make Connections**
Once you have created your professional profile, contact old and new connections. Your goal each day should be to inspire others to connect with you and leverage those connections with colleagues, friends, and family. Networking could lead you to your next internship or job.

**Google Yourself**

![What I Discovered:](#)

![What I Didn’t Like:](#)

![What I Liked:](#)

![Take Action:](#)