NETWORKING

What is Networking?
Networking is a form of proactive relationship-building that exposes you to an industry, career field, or person you'd like to know more about. It is used as a way to gather information on industry trends and cultures, job responsibilities, opportunities and expectations and available resources.

Networking can also provide you with an opportunity to practice your presentation and communication skills for future job interviews. It is imperative to keep in mind that networking is not all about getting or asking for a job; rather, it should be thought of as a way to increase your visibility in a target industry and stay on top of relevant information.

Why is it Important?
Networking allows you to build professional relationships in your target industry, so it is important to cultivate and maintain this network. Your network will be an invaluable resource for you throughout your professional career, allowing you to gather more information about industries, companies, and job opportunities that will enhance your career development.

Most job openings are not advertised—roughly 80 percent of all job opportunities are filled through informal contacts and referrals. According to WetFeet.com, "most organizations look first at people they know and people who come recommended by people they know when it comes time to hire someone. Networking gives you an earlier chance at an opportunity, at a time when you can still help shape the job description and influence the level and pay range of the position."

Where do I begin to network and how does it work?
Developing relationships with industry professionals may seem intimidating at first. In order to be successful, you must have a goal in mind, be genuine in your approach, and exude confidence and knowledge. Here is a general model of how the networking cycle works:

I. Personal Contacts: The best place to start cultivating your network is with the people you know best—friends, family, colleagues, faculty, and acquaintances; these people are not necessarily going to offer you direct job leads, but can provide advice on your resume and help you identify your skills. They are likely to have friends and colleagues of their own that may be able to help you make a connection. During this first stage, you'll want to gather information from them and be clear about what you are interested in. Ask if they know of any relevant industry professionals they can put you in touch with that could be a valuable resource.

II. Referred Outside Sources: Once you have gathered referrals from your personal contacts, you'll want to arrange meetings with these contacts. They may or may not know of any specific job opportunities, but can provide you with valuable information of where your skills would be a good fit, as well as useful contacts.

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III. Gatekeepers: The "Gatekeepers" are industry professionals known by your referred outside contacts who are looking to hire. At this stage, you are speaking with professionals that either have the power to connect you directly to an opportunity, or refer you to a known opportunity.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are several for every type of career. Ask your contacts what associations they belong to, research other associations in the area, and attend meetings to expand your contact list.

EMERSON CONNECTIONS

Emerson Connections is an informational interviewing program available only to Emerson students and alumni. Many alumni currently working in a variety of industries and job functions have volunteered to share career information. This is a great opportunity to ask these alumni specific questions about their career fields. The information you acquire and the relationships you establish with other Emersonians will help you begin to develop your own professional network.

NETWORKING WORKSHOP

Career Services holds several networking workshops throughout the academic year. Through this workshop, you will learn the fundamentals of networking, how to develop your own networking style, and how to successfully handle various networking situations through role-playing.

Networking Tips

- Have a positive attitude when you network.
- Be clear in identifying what you want—for example, requesting a half an hour of their time for industry information.
- Prepare questions in advance of a meeting or telephone conversation. Be succinct, courteous, and appreciative.
- Talk to strangers and mingle with people you don't already know at meetings and events. Introduce yourself!
- Share information, ideas, resources, and contacts with others. Networking is a two-way street.
- Limit the amount of assistance or information you seek from one person.
- Follow up on leads you have been given. You don't want to embarrass those who have made connections for you.
- Respect other people's confidentiality. Trust is a vital part of networking.
- Keep your conversations brief, and make arrangements to call or meet at another time if you discover areas of mutual interest.
- Incorporate networking into your everyday life. It is a powerful tool for marketing yourself.

ELECTRONIC NETWORKING

While you need to be careful of your "digital dirt", having a presence on one of the professional or social networking sites can increase your contacts. LinkedIn is the main professional networking site with many Emerson College alumni and students participating.