

Networking

Networking is the practice of creating mutually beneficial relationships. It takes time and practice, so start early – in the first year of your course.

Why Network?

- Find out about different job roles in your area of interest
- Learn about different career pathways
- Obtain up-to-date industry information
- Identify employers you might like to work for
- Build confidence in your ability to speak to employers
- Discover what skills employers are looking for
- Make contacts to obtain work experience or get your foot in the door
- Tap into the hidden job market



Getting Started with Networking

Actively engage in conversations with people you come in contact with on a day-to-day basis, introducing yourself as someone seeking employment. Attend the Careers Fairs and Employer Presentations organised by Careers and Employment – see our website for details. People you already know may be able to assist with your networking and job seeking process: family, friends, lecturers, tutors, and colleagues or supervisors at current or past workplaces, and members of clubs or associations that you belong to, can all be useful contacts. Each of these people may help clarify your strengths, employment goals and strategies and may know other people who you could contact regarding information interviewing, work shadowing, or work experience.

eNetworking using Social Media sites

Use websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to research organisations of interest and connect to the global word on the street about employment opportunities and industry developments.

It's not just about what you know
It's not just about who you know

It's about WHAT you know and WHO you know

Professional Associations

Joining professional associations (for example a law society or local Chamber of Commerce) can be a good way to build your network and many of these groups publish or advertise positions in regular newsletters or journals. Attendance at association or industry events, conferences and seminars provide great opportunities to meet people working in your intended industry, and student memberships are often available at a discounted rate. Search the internet for relevant associations and upcoming events in your field.

QUT Career Mentor Scheme

The QUT Career Mentor Scheme facilitates a relationship between a student and an industry professional for the duration of an academic year, March to November. Mentors act as a guide, a source of information, and a sounding board for students, offering guidance and encouragement in their chosen field of expertise. See the Careers & Employment website for more details.

Top Networking Tips

- Have a clear idea of your purpose for networking – if you are attending a networking event, do some research on the group first, as this can help to give a positive first impression.
- Always dress presentably when attending meetings or events.
- Prepare a brief introductory pitch with key points about yourself, your skills and your study.
- You don't need to be loud and outgoing to be successful at networking.
- Use a good firm handshake when introducing yourself, ask questions and listen.
- You don't have to do all the talking – listen politely and be interested in the conversation.
- Create yourself a business card including your course of study, university, contact details, and perhaps a link to your LinkedIn profile – see our specific LinkedIn handout for more help with this. Ensure you have a professional email address and voicemail.
- Say thank you in person or via email - let your contacts know that you value their assistance, ideas, and suggestions
- Follow up on advice and respond to phone calls and emails from contacts promptly.
- Keep accurate records of all your interactions – don't rely on your memory to recall details.
- Networking is a two-way street – think about how you can help your contacts.
- Your confidence will grow with every positive experience.

Why not volunteer to help out at an association event?
It's often much easier to get talking to people when you are working on something together

Information Interviewing

Research shows that some of the most successful job seekers spent time talking to people in various organisations before they started seeking employment. This enabled them to gain a better idea of how their skills and experiences fit into specific industries and career fields, and find out first-hand what type of work environment different jobs offered. This process of gathering information through personal contact is known as **information interviewing**.

Information interviewing enables you to target your job search to the particular organisations and positions which are most suited to your specific skills and abilities. It also helps you develop confidence in approaching others – a skill which proves valuable when developing job leads.

Research the area you want to work in:

- What types of jobs do the people do?
- What do they actually involve?
- What sort of career structure do they have?
- Are there any professional organisations you could contact?
- What about qualifications and training?
- Who are the potential employers?
- What are their specialities?
- Which ones are you going to target?
- Who are you going to contact there?



Gathering information through information interviewing helps you make your application better and your job interview answers more relevant.

Information Interview Questions

Questions to ask during your work experience or at a networking event...

About the work role:

- What tasks do you do in a typical week?
- What are your main responsibilities and priorities?
- What are the skills needed?
- What are best and worst parts of your job?
- Is it different from what you expected?

About career development:

- How long do people stay in this organisation?
- What additional responsibilities can staff take on?
- How is the work changing?
- What sort of jobs do people move on to?
- What do you need to be, or do, to move on?

About getting in:

- How did you get in and is it different now?
- What qualities and qualifications are needed?
- Are there any useful stepping stone jobs or voluntary experience I should look for?
- If you had to overcome any barriers e.g. age, gender, ethnicity... how did you do this?
- Where are the vacancies advertised?

About the organisation and its culture:

- Is the structure of the organisation changing?
- Can you tell me about your organisation's...
 - equal opportunities policy (job sharing, promotion, development, etc.)?
 - attitude to older graduates?
 - salaries on entry?
 - progression through the organisation?

And finally...

- Can you suggest other people I can talk to?
- Can you suggest books, trade or professional bodies to consult

While gathering information, stop and think:

Does what I'm finding out about this type of work show me that it really suits my aims and interests?

Information interviewing can be done through face-to-face contact, over the phone, or through email.



Want more info? See the Career Development Program module titled: **Information Interviewing** – access it from www.careers.qut.edu.au/student/develop