My Perspective on Networking

Professor Acram Taji
Director International Graduate Research
What is networking?

- Networking is *actively building connections* and appreciating how these connections can enhance our own skills.

- Networking is both the means toward – and the experience of – connecting with a range of people whose perspectives, experience and knowledge we can draw on.

- Most of us network without even realising we are doing it!
Why is networking necessary?

Who are we likely to approach in a sea of faces at a function?
Our natural networks - who are they?

Our natural networks are those we meet in our day-to-day life. e.g.

- Friends
- Relatives
- Neighbours
- Current and past fellow workers
- Community groups (e.g. scientific organisations, mosque, church, etc)
- Volunteer buddies and acquaintances (e.g. our children’s school tuck shop, etc.)
Other networks

- Our natural network intersects with other similar networks, because each member of our network has his/her own network, and so on.

- These intersecting circles mean we already have a very large network, which is constantly expanding and forever changing.
Why do we need networks?

- For personal reasons
  - Support (both financial and emotional)
  - Development
  - Fun

- For professional reasons
  - Career
    - PhD
    - Post-doc
    - Jobs

- For progress of our research projects
  - Information
  - Collaboration
Successful networks

The following qualities are key factors in successful networking:

- Being proactive
- Demonstrating an interest in others and a willingness to learn
- Communicating effectively

Clear communication is the key point. Whenever we express ourselves on paper and verbally, we are communicating something about ourselves.

Our communication skills will influence how and to what extent a contact will be prepared to assist us. Successful networkers show an interest in everyone they talk to, ask relevant questions, and, above all, listen and follow up on advice they have received.
Identifying our Networks

Those whom we already know. e.g.:

- Personal networks
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Neighbours
  - Workmates

- Professional networks
  - Fellow students
  - Supervisors
  - Colleagues including those in other institutions
  - Through research connections (e.g. journal articles, sabbatical, membership of professional bodies, etc.)
  - Others (e.g. industry, serendipity, etc)
Creating networks

Who do we want to know?

- Personally
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Neighbours
  - Workmates

- Professionally
  - Fellow students
  - Supervisors
  - Colleagues including those in other institutions
  - Through research connections (e.g. journal articles, sabbatical, membership of professional bodies, etc.)
  - Others (e.g. industry, serendipity, etc.)
How to use our networks

- Our personal networks
  - Financial and emotional support
  - Advice, suggestions

- Our professional networks
  - Research methods and directions
  - Feedback on writing
  - Introductions to others in the field
  - Empathy and sympathy
  - Collaboration
  - Tips about grants
  - Potential future supervisors/ examiners
  - Future source of grants (e.g. industry networks)
How to find professional networks?

- Profession or discipline organisations
- Academic publications
- Conferences
- General internet topic search
- Social organisations
- Related industries or companies
- Others
Conferences…..

Are great for seeing the world and disseminating our work, but also for establishing networks:

- Future examiners (Who was interested in our work?)
- Future employers (What did you think of them?)
- Future collaborators
- Editors and publishers
- Peers in a community of practice
Some examples of my own very recent networks

- My neighbour – Dog-sitting while I was overseas
- My family- Proof-reading these slides
- My professional network:
  - Review of Biology Department in USP, Fiji
  - Japanese distinguished fellowship
  - My links with unis in other parts of the world leading to signing of agreements (e.g. Vietnam, Thailand, Iran, etc.)
  - Invitation to do a chapter for a book
  - Invitation to give keynote lectures in Bali or Bangalore, etc.
  - Our experience in Tripoli/ Damascus with Arab Medical Board of Specialists
  - PhD thesis examination for University of Canterbury in NZ
Nurturing our networks

- Keep a networking log that will record who, when and where you made contact with someone.
- Thank everyone who has helped you (via email or a letter that includes your contact details and in your thesis acknowledgements).
- Keep in touch - drop a line to your network every now and then.
Our networks grow and change as time goes by

- PhD student
- Early career
- Mid career
- Later in our career
Thank you for your attention

Professor Acram Taji  
Director International Graduate Research  
Queensland University of Technology  
GPO Box 2434  
Brisbane, Qld., 4001, AUSTRALIA  
Phone: +61-7-3138 6800 or +61-7-3138 7411  
Fax: +61-7-3138 1508  
Email: acram.taji@qut.edu.au