Networking Guide

Networking is the practice of establishing and maintaining professional relationships with individuals in your field or industry. It involves connecting with people who can offer insights, advice, and support for your career development. Networking helps you understand career pathways and identify professional goals. It also offers strategic advantages in the search for career opportunities. The connections you make during college can have a significant impact on your future, so start early.

Strategies for Effective Networking:

1) Set a Goal

Take some time to understand why networking can help you as part of your professional and career development. Once you have questions, you can figure out who has answers, and how you can reach out to them.

2) Prepare

First, prepare an elevator pitch to use in cold emails and when introducing yourself to contacts. A Pitch is a concise (no more than 60 seconds) and compelling introduction of yourself, your goals, and your background. Next, create and maintain a professional online presence on platforms like LinkedIn. (Use CPD's LinkedIn resources to get started).

3) Identify contacts

Begin identifying contacts by first speaking with your friends, family, teammates, professors, and alumni. Once you have practiced your pitch and identified connections through people you know, you are ready to expand your network and contact people you do not already know. Reach out to alumni (use our UConnect alumni networking resource, join the Ursinus Alumni LinkedIn group, attend networking events and career fairs) and find contacts through LinkedIn and professional associations.

4) Outreach

Send an email from your Ursinus account or InMail to new contacts. In 3-4 sentences, briefly introduce yourself (use elements of your pitch), explain how you are connected or how you identified the contact, and make your ask. See the cold email example in this guide to help you.

5) Research

Prepare for your conversation by looking the contact up on LinkedIn, reading about recent news at the contact's company, and visiting the company website to understand products, services, mission and values. Take a look at CPD's Information Interviewing Guide for tips and a list of questions to ask during your conversation. Authenticity is key to building lasting relationships so be genuine and avoid coming across as transactional.

6) Follow-up

After the meeting, send a follow-up email expressing gratitude for their time and reiterating your interest in staying connected. This shows professionalism and genuine interest. Keep in touch with your connections by sending occasional updates, sharing relevant articles, or congratulating them on their achievements.

Networking Resources

Sample Pitch

Hi, I'm [Your Name], a sophomore psychology student at Ursinus College. I have a strong interest in understanding human behavior and the mind. Through my coursework and research projects, I have been exploring topics like cognitive psychology and the impact of social interactions on mental health. I am also an active member of the psychology club, where I have organized events that promote mental well-being on campus. I am eager to contribute my knowledge to research that can improve lives and to eventually pursue a career in clinical psychology. I am interested in speaking with clinical psychologists to learn more about the field.

This is just an example to help you get started. Personalize your pitch by incorporating your own experiences, accomplishments, and aspirations to make it truly reflective of who you are as a student.

Networking Email

The goal of a networking email is to start a relationship. The best way to do that is by being authentic and intentional in your outreach. Find the right people and approach them with an honest, simple request that is valuable for you both.

The e-mail should be short enough for someone to read and respond to in under a minute - about three or four sentences.
- First sentence: How you are connected/how you found the contact
- Second sentence: Discuss any of the following if applicable: How you are connected, why you think it would be valuable to talk, why you are reaching out
- Third sentence: Ask to speak with them to discuss their career path, industry, and/or company.
- Fourth sentence: Give them a time frame to talk within the next two weeks. Include your full name and phone number in the closing.

   Example:

   Hello Deepak,

   I came across your LinkedIn profile while researching Ursinus alumni in business and I see you have had several roles for great brands like Cisco. I would like to ask you a few questions about your career path and how you got to where you are today. Do you have time for a quick 20-minute informational interview via phone in the next few weeks? Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you.

   Best,
   Anna Tharpe
   (610) 409-3599

Thank You Email

As soon as possible after a networking call or meeting, send the contact an email expressing gratitude for their time and reiterating your interest in staying connected. Customize the following template to reflect specific details of your conversation. Personalization and genuine appreciation are key components of an effective thank you email.

   Example:

   Dear [Contact's Name],

I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for taking the time to connect with me at Ursinus's networking event yesterday. It was a pleasure discussing [topic of conversation] and learning about your experiences in [industry/field].

I found our conversation about [specific point from your conversation] inspiring and informative. Your insights into [mention a specific part of their experience or advice] were valuable and have given me a new perspective on [relevant topic].

I appreciate your willingness to share advice about [specific piece of advice or insight]. If there are additional resources or events you recommend for the [name of industry] field, I would greatly appreciate it.

Once again, thank you for your time and generosity in sharing your expertise. I look forward to keeping in touch.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
[Your Phone Number]