Networking

What is networking?

“Networking is defined as the act of making contact and exchanging information with other people, groups and institutions to develop mutually beneficial relationships”\(^1\)

The base of a good network is trust. Don’t forget that networking is ‘give and take’. It is about the long-term and how you can help each other. Don’t feel burdened if you are not able to return a favor immediately. Who knows what you can do for someone over a period x.

Why is a good network invaluable?

Your network

- Has knowledge about jobs;
- Knows people who are applying;
- Knows people to whom you are interesting;
- Knows people who are interesting for you;
- Is familiar with trends / future within an industry and/or companies.

Networking is often seen as difficult or scary, but it is actually a matter of ‘just do it’.

Preparation

Everything depends on good preparation; you want to gain information and leave a good impression. Take your time to prepare the following questions before you start ‘networking’.

- What is your goal?
- What would you like to achieve?
- Within what time span do you want to achieve something?
- Create a plan and investigate; if I want to know x, where or for whom should you start looking?
- Gather contact details, information about someone’s job, company information, information about an industry etc.
- What information would you like to gather?
- What questions or assumptions do you have? – prepare your questions
- Whom would you like to contact eventually? Which steps do you need for this?

Your network

In theory, everyone who knows you or has met you and has a positive impression of you, is your network.\(^2\)

Think of

Family / friends / (former) course mates / (former)lecturers / former classmates / your study or student association / your sports club or any other club you are a member of or have been / (former) colleagues / alumni of your education and/or university

\(^1\) http://www.yourdictionary.com/networking
\(^2\) www.carrieretiiger.nl
General tips
If you approach someone, always explain how you received someone’s contact details!

- Networking starts NOW: networking is long-term;
- Information is everywhere;
- Make sure you always carry a pen and paper, take notes and keep track of your contacts and appointments;
- Networking is based on mutual trust;
- Everyone is approachable;
- Use the contacts you already have;
- Network with people you can get along well with. This ensures that you understand each other in what you do;
- When it comes to networking always start with ‘giving’ instead of ‘taking’;
- Make sure you have a good reputation: don’t recommend people of whom you doubt their motives;
- Don’t forget who helps you, always thank someone;
- Treat your network with care;
- Introduce yourself properly;
- Ask if you can join a group (you) and take part in a conversation;
- Listening is very important;
- Don’t give up, keep your goal in mind;
- Be honest and sincere;
- ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’;
- If you receive a tip that is not useful for you, maybe you are able to make someone else happy with it. Let the tipster know;
- Don’t forget what you can do for someone else;
- Also notify the other person when you don’t need them;
- Ask for a confirmation by email for example;
- Try to arrange a follow up;
- Ask people if they will keep you in mind.

Online networking
- Subscribe to newsletters and follow interesting companies via social media;
- Follow interesting people, companies and/or discussions;
- Make sure your offline and online a personal branding match;
- Make sure people are able to find you online;
- Know what keywords are being used to find you;
- Try to arrange a real appointment;
- Keep your professional and private (social media) network separate;
- LinkedIn:
  - Make sure your profile looks good
  - Make use of alumni
  - Join interesting groups
Offline networking

- Ask for a business card; note on the back what you can do for each other;
- Don’t get distracted by your phone;
- Keep your attention to the person you are talking to;
- If you want to end a conversation, do it politely. Mention that you would like to talk to other people as well.

Offline networking opportunities

- Career fair
- Birthday
- (Telephone) appointment
- Conference, drinks or other (networking) event
- Education or course
- ‘Work shadowing’ – Join someone for work for a day

Networking competencies

Good listener / no fear to start a conversation / empathy / being able to make connections quickly / being able to give advice / being flexible / go-getter / having a broad interest / being helpful / thinking in opportunities

Questions you can ask during a meeting or networking conversation

*Remember, that almost everyone likes to talk about their job and therefore with you! Also remember: assumptions are killing, if you ‘think’ you know, but are not a 100% sure, ask about it.*

- How did you get your job?
- What makes your job interesting?
- Why do you enjoy going to work?
- What are the most important competencies in your job?
- What knowledge or competencies do you use mostly?
- In general: what should someone bring to be able to perform well in your job?
- Which tasks and responsibilities do you have?
- How does a day or week at work look like?
- How is the organization structured? – ask for an organization chart
- What does the organizational culture look like?
- What does the recruitment policy look like within the organization / industry? – ask if it is possible to talk to someone from HR
- What makes you proud of the company you work for?
- What challenges do you face?
- What challenges does the organization / industry face at this moment?
- What does the future look like for the organization / industry?
- Will you let me know if you hear something interesting for me?
- I am orientating on the labor market, do you know someone who might be interesting to me?
- Can I send you my CV?
- Can I have your business card?
- Do you have any tips for me?