

Networking

What is networking?

"Establishing and maintaining contacts with other people, which may benefit you at another time¹."

The foundation of a good network is trust. Please bear in mind that networking is a matter of give and take. It is all about the long-term relationship and what you can do for each other. Do not be concerned if you are not immediately able to do something in return. Who knows what you might be able to do for someone at some later point in time?

Why is having a network valuable? Your network

- ☐ Knows about jobs;
- ☐ Knows people who are currently looking for applications;
- ☐ Knows people that would be interested in you;
- ☐ Knows people that are of interest to you;
- ☐ Is familiar with current and future trends in a sector and/or companies.

Networking is often seen as troublesome and scary, but it really is just a matter of practice makes perfect.

Preparation

Everything hinges on being well-prepared: you want to acquire information and leave a good impression. Take the time to answer the following questions before you go networking.

- ☐ What is your goal?
- ☐ What do you want to achieve?
- ☐ What is your time frame for accomplishing something?
- ☐ Create a plan and conduct research: if I want to know x, where do I have to look and who do I have to ask?
- ☐ Gather contact details, information about someone's position, company information, information about the sector, etc.
- ☐ What information would you like to acquire?
- ☐ What questions or assumptions do you have? Prepare the questions you want to ask.
- ☐ Whom would you ultimately like to contact? What steps do you need to take to accomplish this?

Your network

In principle, anyone who knows or has known you and has a positive impression of you is in your network².

This includes:

Family / friends / former or current fellow students / former or current teachers / former or current classmates / your study or student association / a sports club or other association of which you are or were a member / former or current colleagues / alumni from your degree programme or university.

¹ <http://www.reviewsandroses.nl/beter-bloggen/beter-bloggen-netwerken/>

² www.carriëretijger.nl

General tips

If you approach someone, always explain how you acquired their name and contact information!

- ❑ Start with networking NOW: it is all about long-term planning;
- ❑ Information is everywhere;
- ❑ Always have a pen and paper, take notes, stay up-to-date on your contacts and appointments;
- ❑ Networking is based on mutual trust;
- ❑ Everyone can be approached;
- ❑ Utilise the contacts that you already have;
- ❑ Network with people that you get along with. This will ensure that you both understand how the other operates;
- ❑ When networking, start by “giving” and move on to “taking” later;
- ❑ Maintain your good name: do not recommend people if you are suspicious of their motives;
- ❑ Do not forget those who help you—always express gratitude;
- ❑ Handle your network with care;
- ❑ Introduce yourself politely;
- ❑ Ask whether you may join the group and take part in a conversation;
- ❑ Listening is very important;
- ❑ Keep asking questions;
- ❑ Don't give up quickly, keep your goal in mind;
- ❑ Be honest and sincere;
- ❑ “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”;
- ❑ If you receive a tip that does not work for you, it may be beneficial to pass this along to someone else. Let the person who gave you the tip know this;
- ❑ Never forget what you can do for someone else;
- ❑ Be sure to let others know when you do not need their help;
- ❑ Ask for a confirmation via email;
- ❑ Try to schedule a follow-up;
- ❑ Ask whether people can keep you in mind in the future.

Online networking

- ❑ Join newsletters and follow interesting companies on social media;
- ❑ Follow interesting people, companies, and/or discussions;
- ❑ Be sure that your offline and online personal branding match;
- ❑ Be sure that people can find you online;
- ❑ Know which search words/terms are used;
- ❑ Try to arrange an actual face-to-face meeting;
- ❑ Keep your private (social media) and professional networks separate;
- ❑ LinkedIn:
 - Make sure that your profile looks good
 - Utilise alumni contacts
 - Join interesting groups

Offline networking

- ☐ Ask for a business card. Write what you can do for each other on the back;
- ☐ Do not get distracted by your mobile;
- ☐ Stay focused on the person you are speaking with;
- ☐ If you need to end a conversation, do it politely. Indicate that you would still like to speak with others.

Offline networking opportunities

- ☐ Career fairs;
- ☐ Birthdays;
- ☐ Face-to-face or telephone meetings;
- ☐ Conferences, social drinks, or other events;
- ☐ Training programmes, studies, or courses;
- ☐ "Work shadowing" - spending a day alongside someone as they work.

Networking skills

Being a good listener / being unafraid to start conversations / showing empathy / ability to quickly establish connections / ability to provide advice / flexibility / perseverance / a broad range of interests / helpfulness / thinking in terms of possibilities

Questions you can ask during a meeting or networking conversation

Remember that almost everyone enjoys talking about their job, so they will be happy to talk to you about it as well! Also remember: assumptions can be fatal. If you think you know something, but are not 100% certain, then ask the person.

- ☐ How did you get your job?
- ☐ What do you find interesting about your job?
- ☐ What do you enjoy about your work?
- ☐ What are the most important skills required for your job?
- ☐ What kinds of knowledge/skills do you use the most?
- ☐ In general, what does someone have to bring to the table in order to do well at your job? Or to fit in well within the company?
- ☐ What are your tasks and responsibilities?
- ☐ What does your work day/work week look like?
- ☐ How is the organisation structured? Ask for an organogram
- ☐ What is the company culture like?
- ☐ What are the recruitment policies within the organisation / sector like? Ask if it would be possible for you to meet with an HR staff member
- ☐ What makes you proud about working for this company?
- ☐ What types of challenges do you face?
- ☐ What types of challenges is the organisation / sector currently facing?
- ☐ What are the future prospects of the organisation / sector?
- ☐ Would you let me know if you happened upon something that might be of interest to me?
- ☐ I am currently focusing on the labour market. Would you happen to know someone else I could speak with or who would be of interest to me?
- ☐ May I send my CV?
- ☐ May I have your business card?
- ☐ Do you have any tips for me?