

NETWORKING TIPS

BODY LANGUAGE

Clumping up with a group of friends, or standing in the back corner of a room will make you less approachable. Do not be afraid to break away from your friends and push yourself outside of your comfort zone. That does not mean you have to go it entirely alone; if you are nervous about striking up a conversation on your own, you might consider asking a friend to introduce you to an employer they have already built a connection with. It is also wise to have a plate of food or bottle of water in your hands. Not only is having something in your hand likely to make you feel more comfortable, it will also help you avoid crossing your arms or closing off your body language, making you more approachable.

ELEVATOR PITCH

An elevator pitch is a succinct speech that summarizes your interests, goals, and achievements for a networking contact or potential employer. With practice, you should be able to quickly and easily answer when a potential employer asks you, "tell me about yourself".

BUSINESS CARDS

If you are interested in continuing your conversation with a contact at a later date, ask them for a business card. Take a few moments after your conversation to jot down notes on the back of the card to remind yourself what you chatted about and how you would like to follow up. Be sure to follow up within the next day or two. Remember, these employers will also be meeting other students, so it may be wise to reintroduce yourself and reference your prior conversation when you follow up.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Prior to most networking events, you should be able to get a general sense of who is going to be there. Spend some time prior to the event deciding who you might be interested in connecting with. Your goal should be to try to make a just a few meaningful connections, not to meet every single person in the room. Also remember not to dismiss a potential connection with someone does not work within your industry of choice, you never know who that person might know.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Networking is not about selling yourself to a potential employer, it is about building strong professional relationships. Showing a sincere interest in the other party and asking thoughtful questions will allow you to build a relationship while gathering information about the employer and their industry. See below for sample questions that may help you start a conversation.

SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose a career in this industry?
- What do you like most about your work? What do you like the least?
- What aspects of your education and past experiences best prepared you for your work?
- What is a 'typical' career path for someone in this field? Are graduate degrees common?
- How would you describe your work/life balance? Is that common for someone in this field?
- What are the most important skills a candidate needs to obtain a position in your organization?
- What were some of the biggest challenges you've encountered at work, and how did you manage those?
- What are your most satisfying accomplishments in your career to date?
- What changes do you anticipate seeing in your field in the future?
- What advice would you give to someone interested in exploring opportunities in this industry?