

Networking Guide

What is networking and why do it?

Networking is a process of cultivating and maintaining relationships. It can be formal or informal, and can take place at any time or anywhere, like at a family gathering or a CAAA Networking event. Networking is not just about what you get out of the connection, but is a mutually beneficial relationship. Networking is important because it allows you to build a “network” of relationships that will help you develop and improve your skill set, stay on top of the latest trends in your industry, keep a pulse on the job market, meet prospective mentors, partners, and clients, and gain access to the necessary resources that will foster your career development.

In-person Networking

Networking Preparation

Most of the time, you will have the opportunity to prepare for networking before an event, conference, training, business dinner, etc. Use the following tips to guide your preparation for times when you are planning on networking. However, networking can happen at any time so do your best to always be prepared (you never know who you will meet on a ski lift).

- Have a goal. Ask yourself, “why am I going to this event”. Come up with two or three outcomes you hope to get from the event, whether it is a new job lead or meeting three new people.
- If you are signed up for an event or conference, look up the conference attendee list and research attendees that you would like to meet. Note the individuals and read anything they may have published or written recently to see what they are engaged in.
- Read articles and news related to the event or company. If the networking event is with teachers, read several articles about the latest teaching trends to have talking points with other networking participants
- Practice your elevator pitch. In case you are asked, you should be ready to give a 30 second to 2 minute persuasive speech to spark interest about you as an employee (if looking to get hired) or about our business (if seeking out new clients)
- Just like an interview it is important to have examples of your work and experience ready. Identify examples from your work experience and consider the STAR Method for composing your answers:
 - S-Situation: set the scene. When and where did the situation take place?
 - T-Task: What was the task or challenge?
 - A-Action: What actions did you take to achieve the task or solve the problem?
 - R-Result: What was the end result? IF not completely positive, what did you learn from the experience?
- If you are nervous meeting new people or are not sure how your elevator pitch sounds, practice with a friend or in front of a mirror to get comfortable.
- Show up on time to the event to maximize your time to meeting with individuals. Most people do not show up on time and so it will give you an opportunity to speak to the host or speakers of the event before others arrive.

Networking Guide

What to bring networking:

- Bring business cards or way for individuals to contact you (like the [LinkedIn QR code](#))
- If (and only if) it is an event designed to be a hiring event, bring multiple copies of your resume. If it is a hiring event, bring a notepad and pen to take notes.

Dressing for Networking:

- Start by researching the event's dress code often it will be listed on an event page or reach out to the organizer of the event to find out. When in doubt error on the side of wearing something fancier. It is better to be a little over dressed than under dressed.
- Wear clothes that make you comfortable and confident.
- Check for stains, snags, pet hairs and holes. Make sure the clothing is pressed and wrinkle free.

At the event:

- The basics: smile, introduce yourself, and shake hands (if appropriate)
- Listen first, then speak. Ask an easy question and let the other person speak first. Actively listen, be attentive, don't interrupt, and make sure to hear and understand what the person is sharing with you. Wait for the speaker to pause to ask any follow-up questions.
- Ask easy questions:
 - What brings you to the event?
 - Have you been to an event like this before?
 - Are you working on anything exciting?
 - What is a highlight of your day?
 - What do you like to do in your free time?
- Share your passion. Win people over with your enthusiasm. Talking about what you enjoy is often contagious. This can also be flipped into a great question by asking what others are passionate about.
- Find common ground. If you are at a CAAA networking event, you probably have UC Davis in common with other event attendees. This can be a great conversation starter and build new connections.
- Be yourself. You are uniquely you. Be authentic and honest in your conversations.
- Make eye contact with those you are conversing with. Be present. Don't look around for other people to talk to while you are in the middle of a conversation.
- Keep your answers positive, do not speak negatively about past employers or bosses.
- Ask for someone's business card when you are wrapping up talking. Make notes on the card about what you talked about so you can reference when you follow up.
- Sharing is caring. If you are willing to share your contacts and resources, others will be more likely to help you as well. Develop a sincerity in your giving nature without expectation of something in return.

Sample of Great Networking Questions:

- What are you most excited about at the moment?
- What's the next big thing you have coming up?
- If you didn't do what you are doing now – what kind of job would you have?

Networking Guide

- How did you get involved in... (this industry, job, project, etc.)
- How do you think the industry will change in the next few years?
- What resources do you use for keeping up with industry developments? (ie, books, websites, blogs, etc)
- What do you enjoy most about your role?
- Would it be possible for me to grab your business card/email address? It would be great to find out more about [insert topic here].

After the Networking Event:

- Follow-up:
 - A few days after the event, send follow-up emails to anyone you met that you'd like to continue networking with. Make sure to personalize each email, letting each person know you enjoyed meeting them and mentioning something that you talked about. This is also the time to suggest any follow-up, for example, to ask your new contact to meet up for an informational interview.
 - Connect on LinkedIn. Make sure to send a note on how you met similar to the email above with your request to connect

Online Networking

There are lots of ways to take the same principles of in-person networking mentioned above and apply them online. Networking online ranges from personal emails to connecting on Twitter. We will focus on the largest professional networking site, LinkedIn. Keep reading for tips to stand out in a crowd and connect with new individuals online. Also check out the UC Alumni Career Network Webinar on [Unleashing the Power of LinkedIn](#).

LinkedIn

- Make your profile stand out
 - Have a professional looking photo in your profile
 - Update your headline. You have 120 characters to talk about what you do or the type of opportunity you are looking for. Be catchy and honest.
 - Create an engaging summary talking about who you are and what you have to offer.
 - LinkedIn uses your summary for search results, be sure to put in keywords for the type of job you are looking for.
 - Write a catchy first sentence or paragraph. This is your first impression online. Open up about your career, where you have been, and where you want to go. Touch on some of your greatest accomplishments.
 - Make sure your work experience is up to date. Just like a resume, tailor your LinkedIn profile to match the job you hope to get in the future. Keep job descriptions short and in bullet format.
 - Make sure your profile is complete. According to LinkedIn, a 100% complete profile is 40x more likely to receive opportunities through LinkedIn.

Networking Guide

- Post content/Engage with content
 - To build a network on LinkedIn you have to be an active participant and that includes posting interesting and engaging content. Post things that you are passionate about and relevant to the work that you are doing or aspire to do.
 - Not all content has to be your original writing. Share someone else's post, but add a takeaway you learned while reposting. This show the original writer and others that you are actively engaged.
- Join Groups
 - Look for groups like the UC Davis Cal Aggie Alumni Association LinkedIn group and others in areas the interest you, are in your field, or are in an industry you aspire to be in.
 - Look for ways to engage with the content being posted and post your own content in the group as well. Just make sure the content is appropriate for the group you are posting in.
- Connect with others
 - Once you have updated your profile and joined some groups, start connecting with individuals on LinkedIn. Start with the people that you know. LinkedIn will even import your contacts from your email account to match you to people you may know.
 - Always write a personal note with a connection request. Mention how you met or what intrigued you about their profile or something the commented on recently.
 - Just like connecting in person, LinkedIn connections are all about relationships. See how you can help others get connected to someone in your network. Share a connection's post. Then when the time comes and you need an introduction or want to ask for an informational interview the connection will most likely be receptive.
 - Although this guide has talked a lot about giving first and giving authentically with no expectation of something in return. There still comes a time to be bold and ask connections for help, an opportunity, a job, a reference. Don't be afraid to ask.
 - If you have connected with an individual and had consistent communication, don't be afraid to move the conversation off of LinkedIn and into a phone call, coffee chat, or video chat. Nurture and grow the relationships that will help you move forward in your career.