

Guide to...

Networking

bathspa.ac.uk/careers

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Introduction

Networking is about building relationships with people you know and those you don't, to create opportunities for one another. An opportunity could be a job, internship or work placement, a chance to work shadow, or arrange an informational interview - anything that gets you a step closer to where you want to be.

The following scenario has been abbreviated, but is a real example of how networking can be very beneficial:

- During second year, Tom decided he wanted to become a game developer;
- He used online directories to find employers, and researched the most suitable ones he found;
- He contacted several development studios, introduced himself, explained his interest in getting into the sector, and briefly discussed his skills. Two said they would be happy to meet him for lunch;
- He found out more during these meeting, gave in his CV and CD containing work;
- He contacted both a week later – one invited him to work shadow;
- Through this Tom gained contact at another firm more closely related to his interests – led to more work experience;
- Tom was invited to apply for a job at this second firm in his third year.

The term networking sounds scary, but in essence, when you network you're having a chat with a focus. When you don't know the person, the best way to start off is to ask questions, get to know the person and their industry. Having a set of questions at the ready will help structure networking conversations. So, the next time you have an opportunity to talk to someone - lecturers, employers, family, a friend - about your career, it's a good opportunity to put your networking skills into practice.

REVEAL Method

If you are successful at arranging a meeting or attending a networking event then spend time thinking about what you want to say...we all have a tendency to ramble when we're chatting to people and perhaps feel a bit nervous! This is fine when we're socialising, however, in a networking situation it's important to stay focused on what you want to achieve. Having set questions to hand will help you steer the conversation where you need it to go, so consider how the following REVEAL method might be a useful tool for structuring the conversation:

Recap:

- If you have been introduced by another person then remind the listener why you want to talk to them, or explain how you know about them e.g. they were listed on invite.
- Mention you're a student or recent graduate – people are more open to helping students as they're still learning.

Explore:

- What do you enjoy about working in your sector? What do you find most challenging?
- What do you do on a day-to-day basis?
- What's the work culture like at your organisation? What sorts of people do you work with?
- What do you find most interesting and challenging about working in this sector?
- What skills, knowledge, and experience are needed to do the job well?

Vision:

- What skills, knowledge, and experience will be needed in the future?
- What changes can you see in this sector in the next few years?
- How can I prepare myself for the changes in the sector?

Entry:

- What are the most common ways people enter this line of work? How did you get in to the sector/job?
- How do you traditionally apply for jobs in the sector? Is it by CV, online application form, or speculatively? How can I make my application stand out?

Action:

- What do you think is my next step?
- What advice would you give to a student trying to get into this field?

Links:

- Can you recommend any training programmes, books, or websites where I can find out more information?
- Good closing question: I'm keen to speak to a number of people in the field. Would you be able to recommend other people to talk to who are as helpful as you've been?

Top Tips for Networking Events

Before:

- Find out who will be at the event and decide who you want to speak to. Research the companies by visiting their website and reading any news articles on them.
- Prepare your CV ahead of time. Tailor it for the companies that will be in attendance, and/or take along your business card.
- Decide what to wear. Make a positive impression by dressing smartly and appropriately for the sector.
- Identify the skills and knowledge you have to offer and how you can talk about them confidently.
- Have a list of open questions you want to ask people to open up the discussion – this shows listeners you are interested in them.
- Research the job market, recent news, trends, challenges and key issues for the sector in which you want to work. By doing this you show a commitment to your development and demonstrate a personal investment in the work.

During:

- Make eye contact - non-verbal communication is very important when you meet someone for the first time.
- Smile: Scowling, serious, expressions are forbidden. People are more likely to warm up to someone who says good morning with a broad smile than they are to someone who looks unfriendly.
- Have an effective handshake - you have probably been on the receiving end of at least one "bone-crusher" and one "limp fish" so practise your handshake to avoid giving one of those yourself!
- Say the person's name: people like to hear their own name. So when you meet someone, use their name in conversation but not too much. Doing so makes the other person feel more comfortable, like you really know them and they know you.
- Keep in mind that networking is about give and take, being authentic, building trust and relationships, and seeing how you can help others.
- Ask for advice, not a job. Be able to articulate what you are looking for and how others may help you. Too often people in conversations ask, "How may I help you?" and no immediate answer

comes to mind. When you are asked this, try to communicate what role you are looking for, what your skills are and why you want to work in that particular sector.

In closing/after the event:

- Keep in touch with those you meet who may benefit from what you do and vice versa. Express that you enjoyed meeting them, and ask if you could get together and share ideas.
- Follow through quickly and efficiently on contacts you are given. When people give you a named contact, your actions are a reflection on them. Respect and honour that and your network will grow.

Informational Interviewing

An 'informational interview' is a highly focused information gathering session with a networking contact designed to help you make decisions about your career by giving you the 'insider' point of view. When making contact, it is always essential to make the approach in a professional and appropriate manner. You might consider the following templates as a useful pointer on how to do this;

Email template 1: to people you know well/through close connections

Hi <insert name>,

- I'm hoping you can help me... / I was given your contact details by my uncle, <name>
- I graduate next summer and I'm starting to research potential job opportunities.
- I'm looking for a job in <industry name>. Ideally, I'd like to go abroad for 2-3 years.
- I have experience of volunteering overseas with <name of organisation>.
- I'd like to be introduced to people working in <type of organisation>. / My uncle recommended I get your advice on entering the field, seeing as you have 20 years of experience in this area.
- I attach my CV for information.
- Email or call me if you think of anyone./ Would you be willing to answer some questions? I can come to your office at a time which suits you.
- Thank you for your support/ I look forward to hearing from you.

Email template 2: to people you don't know at all

Dear (Insert title and last name),

- **How did you hear about them?** I found your contact details on your website and I saw you were interviewed in Bath Life magazine this month.
- **Include a short personal introduction:** I'm currently studying Publishing & English Literature at Bath Spa University.
- **State any connection or common interest:** I'm aware (insert company name) has consulted for the university on its web marketing.
- **State your career objective/State why you feel they would be helpful:** Once I graduate I intend to work in communications at a marketing agency and, given your position as Director of Communications, I thought you'd be the ideal person to chat to about how to make it happen.
- **Make the request for a conversation:** If you would be willing to meet me, I would be very grateful for your time and advice. I'm more than happy to visit you in person.
- **Thank them:** Thank you for your time and consideration. I attach my CV for your reference.

Phone Script 3: with people you don't know

- **Short intro:** Hi, my name is <insert name> I'm a student at Bath Spa University studying <insert degree title>
- **How do you know them?** I came to a talk on campus where you spoke about getting into <industry sector>. Is now a good time to talk? (Y/N – If No, say: When would be a better time to call you?)
- **State your current career goal:** My goal after I graduate is to get into <industry sector> as a <job title>
- **What do you want from them?** I'd appreciate your advice on how best to kick-start a career in this area. The websites I use give good advice, but I think hearing what you have to say would be more valuable.
- **Ask for a meeting:** Are you free for a chat at some point over the next few weeks? I'd happily come to your office, or meet you at another convenient location.
- **Be clear what times/dates you are available:** I am free Mondays and Wednesdays after 12pm.

Networking Online

Online tools are becoming an increasingly important aspect of networking. Proactive and effective use of online networking tools can support you to build and develop professional relationships, further your career research and discover opportunities. It should be used in complement with face-to-face networking – for example, if you meet a professional in your chosen sector at an event, connecting with them using online networking tools provides a platform for keeping in touch and continuing the conversation – you may also be able to expand your network in your chosen sector by engaging with *their* contacts.

Many students and graduates use LinkedIn; as the world's largest online networking tool, you are likely to find possible connections in every sector locally, nationally and internationally. Other social media platforms may also be used for professional networking and you may find that some are more relevant to your sector than others. See the Bath Spa Careers **"Guide to Using Social Media for Job Hunting"** for further advice.

Top Tips

- Spend time reflecting on the information people give you. What should you act upon?
- Do you need to change the way you apply for jobs/placements?
- Do you need to gain any additional skills and how do you intend to do this?
- What other sources of information did you come away with and have you explored them?
- Always thank the person for their time.
- Follow up via email/LinkedIn reminding them of your conversation (people are always grateful if you thank them for their time) and keep in touch.
- Don't be too pushy...but you will need a bit of confidence and perseverance
- Don't start by asking for a job, always ask initially for advice and information

Links and Resources

- Practice networking by taking part in Bath Spa Award. Go to: bathspa.ac.uk/careers

- www.cio.com/article/2437488/relationship-building-networking/how-to-network--12-tips-for-shy-people.html - 12 Networking tips for shy people
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM6ZBLMLd7s – Video “Networking for people who hate networking”

Further Support from Bath Spa Careers

If you would like further support from Bath Spa Careers & Employability go to **bathspa.ac.uk/careers** to see the ways in which you can access our service, including workshops and events, appointments and to access our extensive range of resources.

You can also contact Careers Reception on 01225 875525 or at careers@bathspa.ac.uk.

Please note that Bath Spa Careers does not endorse particular organisations.

(This guide was last updated in Summer 2019).

GET A HEAD START

We're here to help you get a great start to your career. We're open all year round, so come and visit us in the Careers Space, book an appointment, or get in touch.

Careers Space, SL.G04
Steward's Lodge

careers@bathspa.ac.uk
01225 875525

www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers

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