

# Networking

## What is Networking?

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Networking is about getting to know other people and exchanging information. You network every day without even realizing it. You network by asking a friend what restaurant they recommend, what neighborhood to rent an apartment, or which professors they recommend you take for class.

Networking for your career involves developing relationships with those in the field that you are in or hoping to enter. Through these relationships, you can end up learning about the industry and valuable information that may aid your job search. You can network at large organized events including career fairs, networking events, or individually in one-on-one informational interviews.

If it feels awkward to ask a stranger for a job, that's because it is. When it comes to networking, you are asking for advice/ information to build a relationship. If the person wants to help you out, whether that be through a job lead or recommending you for a position, they will. It is unprofessional to ask for a job or internship outright at an initial meeting.

## Informational Interviewing

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### What is an Informational Interview?

Informational interviews are one-on-one conversations with the goal of learning more about a company, position, or career path. Like job interviews, they can be on the phone, in person, or on Skype. These are traditionally short meetings (about a half-hour long) and are great ways to make contact and learn about industries, if done right, informational interview contacts can be valuable connections throughout your career.

Find someone with the job you want within ten years. Connect with them on a personal level. That's what the real goal of networking is: to learn. And, if you do it well, this knowledge will help you get a job.

### Why have an informational interview?

- Learn about entry-level jobs in the field and career paths.
- Get information about industry trends
- Learn about industry trends, values, goals, issues, and keywords.
- Learn who else to connect with.
- Get feedback—your contact might send you in a direction you weren't expecting.
- To get more information to help you prepare for a job interview.

### Who should I have an informational interview with?

- First- or second- degree connections on LinkedIn (and real life)
- Alums with similar career paths
- People in a company or industry you're interested in who you have something in common

### Where to network?

- Conferences
- Career Fairs
- LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media platforms
- Professional Associations
- Professors
- Anywhere!

## How to initiate an informational interview

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### 1) Ask for a meeting

- State what you are hoping to learn. Possibly include one or two questions you plan to ask them.
- Be direct and concise.
- Be as flexible as possible in scheduling a meeting time and offer a few times that work for you.
- Give the contact two weeks to respond to your email/phone call, and then try again.

### 2) Prepare for the meeting

- Do your research about the person and organization. Don't ask questions that you can find answers to on their website. Your goal is to impress this person so they will connect you to others and/or recommend you for a job at their organization.
- Formulate your goals: Why are you contacting this person? Do you want advice, information, and/or introductions? What are you seeking to learn?
- Prepare questions for the meeting to meet your goals.

### 3) Have the meeting

- Remember to introduce yourself, remind your contact of who you are or tell them where you got their name, and explain why you're calling.
- Keep track of time, which will also show you value theirs.
- Ask for career advice, industry information, and/or more contacts.
- Do not ask for a job or an internship. Instead, you can ask to notify you if any opportunities at their organization come up.

### 4) Follow up after the meeting

- Send a thank you note within 24 hours to show your appreciation. Maintaining contact is your first step in building a longer-term relationship.
- Act on the contact's recommendations. If you were given additional contact names, make sure you follow-up with these people even if the contact does not initially seem relevant; they may still be good contacts and connect you with others.
- Let your contact know if you have connected someone they put you in touch with. This is a great way to stay in touch and show gratitude.

- Follow up to maintain connections. Keep your contacts updated on your job search progress and your success with other references or avenues they recommend. Typically, people who have helped you are genuinely interested to know how your search is going as well as when you find a job. It’s smart to reach out to update them when you DON’T need them!

**Keeping track of your contacts**

Name	Company	How we met	Email	When we last spoke	How we last communicated	Needs	What we last spoke about	Interests/ Notes
Example: New Contact	Name of Org.	Employer info session	<a href="mailto:newcontact@gmail.com">newcontact@gmail.com</a>	February	In person	Candidates with good writing skills	Internships	We spoke about the importance of social media

**Sample informational interview email**

Subject: Informational meeting request from a fellow BU Terrier

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I saw your [LinkedIn/website/article](#) and I’m really interested in pursuing a career in \_\_\_\_\_ as well. Would you be willing to meet and talk about your career path? I am hoping to learn about what skills I need to obtain to become an ideal candidate for this field. I am frequently available in the afternoon after 2 pm on Fridays and Mondays. Let me know if you are willing to speak and if those times work for you.

Best,  
Your Name

**Sample informational interview questions**

Think ahead about the types of questions you’d like to ask during your informational interview. It’s critical to be prepared, as you’ll have time to ask several questions during your exchange. However, you can accomplish a lot in a brief amount of time.

- What does a typical day look like?
- What are the skills needed for this profession; ways to make oneself marketable?
- Which companies/organizations are the competitors in this field?
- What would a rewarding or successful day look like?
- What are the most challenging parts of this profession?
- What does the employment outlook in this field in the next few years? How do you see the field changing?
- How does one achieve career advancement in this organization and field?
- Which professional organizations can you recommend that I join in this industry?

Some questions you should be prepared to answer in the informational interview:

- What is your background and how did you become interested in this field?
- Why did you choose to go to Boston University and what do you expect to gain?
- Where have you applied/ who have you reached out to so far?

## Career Fairs

At career fairs, you have the opportunity to talk to many employers about available positions, the company culture, and more. The companies at career fairs are there in a recruiting capacity: most will have currently available relevant jobs and they're interested in hiring BU students.

### Preparation

- Research companies ahead of time and decide which ones you will visit
- If you're interested in multiple types of positions, make different versions of your resume to target each of those positions.
- Bring copies of your resume.
- Prepare a 20-30 second pitch that addresses your background, experience, and goals/trajjectory.
- Dress professionally. In many cases, that means a suit or nice pants and a sweater.
- Practice your handshake.

Focus on the companies you're most interested in. However, if there are long lines at all of your target companies, make contacts at some of the less crowded tables (if you're at all interested in the company). You'll be able to have more of a conversation. And, with less competition, you'll be easier to remember.

Don't just drop off your resume, talk to the recruiter. If they don't know much about your particular field, ask to talk to someone at the company who might know more. Respect recruiters' (and students') time —recruiters have to talk to hundreds of students.

### Follow up

Take notes on each company, the positions available, and application. Send a short, personalized thank you note within 24 hours to any employers you talked to.

### The Follow-Up Email

Write a thank you letter to all employers you spoke to. Thank them for their time and attendance. Be specific about where you met, and what you discussed in the conversation.

### Follow-Up Email Example:

Dear (name of recruiter),

Thank you so much for taking the time to attend Boston University's COM Internship Fair. It was great to meet you and learn more about (company's name). Our discussion about (whatever specific topic you discussed) was so helpful. I did some research after our conversation and I'm really impressed by (your company)'s (project) for (some topic). I'm really excited about the opportunity to apply my (specific skills you mentioned) on similar projects. As per our discussion, I submitted my application for the (name of) internship online.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,  
Your Name