

NETWORKING- Tip Sheet

Purpose/Importance

Networking is the process of building relationships with others for mutual benefit. From a career perspective, networking involves meeting and connecting with people who can assist you with your career development and job search. It is an effective and informative way to obtain relevant career information and allows others to get to know you. In addition:

- More than 70% of job seekers secure employment by using networking-generated references to uncover the “hidden job market.” These opportunities include many unadvertised positions and positions created to support a particular candidate’s strengths.
- Networking contacts can provide industry-specific information to help you create an effective cover letter and resume.
- Networking contacts can help you evaluate job offers and provide support throughout your search.

Building Your Network

Your network should include people who are willing to give you information about their field as well as feedback on your career development. Your network should also include people who may be in a position to tell you about job opportunities that are open either within their organization or elsewhere. Examples of potential networking contacts and sites to develop contacts include the following:

Places

Career/Job Fairs
Community Groups/Teams
Networking Groups & Events
Professional Associations
Religious Organizations
Student Organizations

People

Alumni Mentors
Coworkers/Formal Supervisors
Fellow Students
Neighbors
Professors
Relatives/Friends

Experiences

Co-ops
Externships/Shadowing
Informational Interviews
Internships
Volunteer Activities
Work-study Jobs

Additional ways of increasing your networking opportunities are listed below.

- Volunteering can be a great place to meet influential people and demonstrate your indispensability.
- Searching the internet can turn up an abundance of career-related information. Many companies post general information as well as employee directories.
- Conducting an informational interview can help you learn about new developments in your field.
- Knowing someone in the employing organization can lead to internal referrals. Many employees are even compensated for suggesting successful candidates.
- Joining a networking group can provide an outlet for people to get together and exchange their leads and ideas. There are a number of Pittsburgh area groups that can be joined in addition to student organizations and may or may not have a membership fee. (Check group website for fee.)

Finding Contacts

- The Alumni Relations office at RMU offers information and programs throughout the year for current students and alumni. All graduates of RMU are automatically members of the Alumni Association. There are no dues and members receive privileges that are available only to RMU alumni.
- Internet sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook offer other creative ways to network and can be used to bolster your professional relationships in a positive way.
- The Robert Morris University Career Network is a LinkedIn group that provides RMU students, alumni, faculty and staff an opportunity to connect with each other about career-related topics. <http://tinyurl.com/cxqtfk3>

Networking Strategies

Networking can seem overwhelming, but it gets easier with time and practice. Remember that many of your networking contacts and referrals have been in the same situation at some point in their lives, and understand your need to network.

1. Talk with your contacts about what kind of job you are looking for and why you thought they might be helpful. Describe a job function even if you do not feel comfortable naming a title (i.e. type of work, industry or setting, and level of responsibility). Give your contact a brief outline of your skills.
2. Write or call any people your contact refers you to, and mention who referred you. Explain that while a position may not currently be available, the opportunity to talk with them is just as valuable and that you would need only a brief meeting. If you write, be sure to follow up with a phone call within a week. (See sample at the end of this tip sheet.)
3. In your meeting, let the new contact know what you are looking for (concisely in a few sentences) and ask for suggestions on what avenues you might pursue. This meeting is also a good opportunity to get an opinion from someone on whether or not your resume will accomplish your objective in that industry. Never conclude a meeting without asking if the new contact can refer you to someone else.
4. Always follow up any referral or meeting with a thank you note. A person likes to know that their time is well spent and appreciated. Be personal and specific. Keep your contact informed of any new leads or job offers that result from their suggestions. (See sample at the end of this tip sheet.)
5. Keep a personal log of your contacts, who they were referred by, and who they referred you to. It is important to keep this information organized.

Maintaining Your Network

You must maintain your network, even once you have secured a job. You could lose your job or decide to leave at any point. You will be in a much better position to begin a new job search if you've kept in contact with the members of your network than if you need to track down and re-connect with those who helped you in the past. In addition, you should continue to add new contacts to your network throughout your career.

Networking at an Event

You should attend a networking event with a purpose. Knowing your objectives will help determine your actions at the event. Some things to consider include the following:

- Place your name tag on the right side, so it forms a line from your handshake to your name.
- When introducing yourself, say your name clearly. "Hello, my name is Amy Smith. It is a pleasure to meet you."
- Have your sales pitch rehearsed. You should be able to describe who you are and what you do in ten seconds or less.
- Always ask the other person for a business card. When you follow up with a new contact, mention the event you met them at.

If you are in a "mingle" situation, here are some tips to "work the room" efficiently:

- Start with small talk.
- Continually move around the room, excusing yourself after eight to ten minutes with a polite "It was nice meeting you..." Don't stay in one place too long.

If the event includes a meal, remember to:

- Use proper table etiquette. Begin conversations by asking others their reasons for attending.
- Avoid dominating the conversation, as listening can lead to learning.

Sample Networking Letter

Jill Jones
1006 Pleasant Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

September 17, 2018

Ms. Jan King
Vice President of Public Relations
The Eastin Hotels, Inc.
1000 Greentree Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Ms. King:

I am currently a junior at Robert Morris University, and I am interested in pursuing a career in public relations. I saw your profile on the Robert Morris University Career Network group on LinkedIn. I appreciate your willingness to discuss your career in public relations with students.

One of my recent activities at Robert Morris included serving as the Chair of the Public Relations Committee for the Robert Morris University Leadership Conference. This experience increased my interest in public relations, and I want to seek a summer internship in order to gain additional experience. As the Vice President of Public Relations for a large hotel chain, your career path is of interest to me. I would like to speak with you regarding your ideas about the profession and summer opportunities that might be worthwhile for a student with my career interests.

I will contact you by telephone next week to arrange a meeting at your convenience. I have enclosed my resume and would appreciate any feedback you may have for me at this point. I look forward to talking with you further.

Sincerely,

Jill Jones

Enclosure

Introductory Networking Phone Call

Secretary: "Eastin Hotel, Mr. Jackson speaking. May I help you?"

Jill: "Good morning, Mr. Jackson. My name is Jill Jones. May I speak with Ms. King, please?"

Secretary: "Yes. May I say what this call is in reference to?"

Jill: "I would like to speak with Ms. King regarding her role as a volunteer in the Robert Morris University Career Network."

Ms. King: "This is Jan King."

Jill: "Ms. King, my name is Jill Jones. I am a student at Robert Morris University. I saw your profile on the Robert Morris University Career Network group on LinkedIn and was interested in speaking to you regarding careers in public relations. At your convenience, I would like to schedule a time when we could talk about your career field, either in person or over the phone."

Ms. King: "Well, Jill, we are not hiring at this time."

Jill: "Ms. King, currently my intentions are to learn about public relations and job search strategies in the Pittsburgh area, not to seek a job. I would really appreciate 30 minutes of your time to discuss the field and seek your advice."

Ms. King: "That sounds fine. How is 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 25th?"

Jill: "Perfect. Thank you, Ms. King. I will forward a copy of my resume for your review prior to our conversation. I appreciate your time and look forward to speaking with you on the 25th at 11:00 a.m."

Sample Thank You Letter

Jill Jones
1006 Pleasant Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

September 26, 2018

Ms. Jan King
Vice President of Public Relations
The Eastin Hotels, Inc.
1000 Greentree Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dear Ms. King:

Thank you for the time you spent with me yesterday discussing careers in public relations. I found the information you shared to be very helpful in targeting my career development.

I have contacted Mr. Ryder at Ruder Finn as you suggested. He is sending me information about their internship program that I intend to apply for. I will let you know the outcome. I am enclosing a copy of my resume with the changes you suggested. I am pleased with the final product and believe it markets my skills more effectively.

I appreciate your assistance and look forward to staying in touch with you. If you have any further suggestions, please contact me.

Again, thank you for all of your help.

Sincerely,

Jill Jones

Enclosure

Sample Elevator Pitches/ Conversation Starters- Seeking Information about Majors and Careers

Hello, Mr. Mrs. Ms. _____,

My name is Daniel Williams, and I am a freshman at Robert Morris University. Some of my skills are working with computers, planning and organizing. For example, in my senior year of high school, I planned, organized, and coordinated a high school play. In addition, I enjoy helping and supervising people. I have always been someone who can step up to assume leadership. Last, my values back up my skills. I am very proud of my personal and academic accomplishments so far. I maintained a 3.9 GPA in high school and at the same time worked 20 hours per week and was involved with my school plays. At Robert Morris University, I have a 3.5 GPA and work part time at the Disney Store. As I am at the beginning of my search for a college major, I am looking for some advice about possible careers and people whom I can contact for more information. Would you be able to offer some advice or steer me to someone who can?

Hello, Mr. Mrs. Ms. _____,

My name is Daniel Williams, and I am a sophomore marketing major at Robert Morris University. I currently work for the Disney Store in Pittsburgh and really enjoy helping people, supervising others, and marketing the store. In addition, I have taken some of my marketing courses, including Principles of Marketing and Sales Strategies. I really enjoy marketing because it enables me to use my competitive nature, sales experience, coursework, and work ethic. I am interested in a marketing internship with your company which would utilize my skills, experience, and abilities. Would you be able to help me get connected to those opportunities?

Sample 'Connect' Message on LinkedIn

Dear Mr. Jones,

We have never met, but I am a member of the Robert Morris University Career Network group and noticed your LinkedIn profile, which stated that you have worked as an accountant in public and corporate accounting. I am an accounting major at Robert Morris University and plan to complete an internship this summer. Before I apply for internships, I would like to learn more about the differences between working in public and private accounting. Can we connect?

Respectfully,
Robert Roy

PITTSBURGH ORGANIZATIONS - Networking (General)

Organization	Website	Fee
Pennsylvania Professional Employment Network (PAPEN)	www.papen.us	\$10.00
Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project (PUMP)	www.pump.org	No Charge
Pittsburgh Young Professionals (PYP)	www.pyp.org	\$50.00