GUIDE TO NETWORKING

The Sage Colleges Office of Career Planning

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http://www.sage.edu/resources/career_planning

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Networking

The goal of networking, from a job search perspective, is to acquire knowledge about career field of interest and build genuine relationships with professionals and experts to increase the likelihood of securing an opportunity for which you are well suited.

Examples of Networking

- Julie meets her friend's father during Family Weekend and learns about his position at a well known advertising firm in New York City. As a result of talking with him and following up to thank him for his time, Julie is given a contact to follow up with about their summer internship program.
- Recently at a college career fair, Emily meets with a Human Resources representative from a national company regarding internship opportunities in California. Although the representative was hiring for the Northeast region, Emily e-mailed the recruiter after the career fair and was able to obtain a company contact on the west coast.
- David spent winter break learning about the Arts Administration career path by conducting informational interviews with Sage alumni and contacts found through his faculty. David's informational interviews allowed him to hear of un-posted job opportunities, which led to interviews, and ultimately a job offer.
- Jessica talks with her English professor about her interests in Journalism. Jessica's professor encourages her to speak with an employer from a Media company that recently presented at a conference he attended.
- During her travels through Kahl Campus Center, Lisa stopped and spoke with a Peace Corps representative who had set up an information table. Lisa learned about the mission of the Peace Corps, the candidate recruitment process, and was provided with contact information of a past volunteer who could provide further insights.

As the examples above illustrate, networking can be conducted in a spontaneous or planned manner. Always be ready to introduce yourself and network.

Identifying and Establishing Your Network

- Start by identifying people you already know. Even if they are not in the fields of interest to you, They can often lead you to people who are. This includes family, club members, friends, community members, professors, coaches, former employers, etc.
- Join clubs and professional organizations that relate to your areas of interest. These can lead to valuable connections to professional within career fields of interest.
- Identify Sage College alumni who are employed in career field of interest through faculty, administrators, and LinkedIn.
- Identify additional contacts via the Book of Lists and the Office of Career Planning.

Strategies for Effective Networking

- When possible, make your initial contact by e-mail. This gives your contact the opportunity to respond when they are able to.
- Prepare and practice yourself introduction so you are prepared when a networking opportunity presents itself.
- Ask contacts for their career advice not for a job or internship.
- Network with entry and mid-level professionals first. After acquiring sufficient knowledge, begin contacting more senior level professionals.
- Always follow up networking meetings and employer visits.
- Organize a tracking system to record names, addresses, meetings, and follow-up.
- Avoid all take and no give (e.g., when talking to Sage alums, update them about Sage).

Conducting Your Informational Interview

Informational interviews are networking meetings where you ask professionals within career fields of interest questions regarding their work, industry, career path, educational background, and job search advice. Informational interviews can be conducted in-person or over the phone, and are a great tool for building your networking and acquiring insider knowledge.

Step 1: Arranging and Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Initiate contact by sending a networking e-mail stating your interest in speaking with your contacts for 15-20 minutes about their career experiences.
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to meet or speak with your contacts. Let them know you appreciate their time and are willing to work around their schedule.
- Research your contact's career field. The Sage Colleges Office of Career Planning has resource tools that can help including The Occupational Outlook Handbook Online and The Sage Colleges Office of Career Planning library.
- Develop several questions to ask your contacts.
- Replace your standard questions with more insightful ones after a few interviews.

Step 2: Conducting the Informational Interview

- Call your contacts from a quiet place where you know you won't be interrupted.
- If meeting in person, plan to dress professionally and arrive 10 minutes early at the prearranged location.
- Reintroduce yourself and explain why you're reaching out to them.
- Begin by asking the questions you prepared. However, be flexible if the conversation takes a different path.
- Keep track of time, let your contact know when 15-20 minutes is up, offer to end the conversation, and follow the contact's lead on ending or continuing the conversation.
- Be sincere, show interest, and thank your contacts for volunteering their time.
- Ask contacts if they would provide you with other professionals that can offer additional career information.
- If the connection is genuine, ask if you can stay in touch.

Important: Not every informational interview will go as planned. Some may be frustrating. It is at this point when most people stop. Don't! Persevere and acquire the knowledge that will allow you to compete more effectively.

Step 3: Follow up

- Send your contact a thank you e-mail or letter immediately following you r conversation.
- Track each networking conversation and note: the date, key information/insights, and next steps established to help facilitate future conversations with this contact.
- If your contact agrees to allow you to keep in touch, mention in your letter that you'll be doing so. Multiple communications (e.g., following up every 4-6 weeks) increase the likelihood that your contact will think of you if/when on opportunity arises.
- If the individuals you spoke with provided additional contacts, keep them updated as to whom you've followed up with.

Self Introduction

Alumni events, guest lectures, career fairs, conferences, athletic events, college reunions, and neighborhood gatherings are all great venues to engage in networking. Prepare and practice a concise introduction so that you're always ready to network effectively. Include your full name, class year, major, and career field of interest, and ask your contact if they would mind if you asked them a couple of questions about their career field. For example:

Hi, I'm Robert Plant (handshake). It's nice to meet you. I am a first year student at Russell Sage College majoring in psychology. I'm interested in learning more about the publishing field and heard that you work at XYZ Publishing. Would you mind if I asked you a couple of questions about your experiences working in publishing?

Remember: The purpose of networking is to acquire knowledge about career fields of interest and build genuine relationships. It is not appropriate to ask for jobs or internships.

Requesting an Informational Interview via E-Mail

Subject: Sage College of Albany Student Seeking Alumni Advice

Dear Ms. Day,

I'm an English major in my junior year at Sage College of Albany, and I have interest in pursuing a career in the field of television and film production. I found your contact and employer information through LinkedIn. I was excited to see that you are currently employed by MTV as a producer. I would very much like to learn more about your experiences in the industry and any advice you'd be willing to share with regards to succeeding in the field.

Would you be willing to speak with me for 15-20 minutes about your experiences in media production at a time that's convenient for you? Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Nick Miller

Follow up/Thank You E-Mail

Subject: Thank You for Your Time and Advice

Dear Ms. Day,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me earlier today regarding your experiences at MTV. Your insights into preparing for a career in media production were extremely helpful.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Nick Miller

Questions to Ask During Informational Interviews

- What are the primary responsibilities of your job?
- What do you like most/least about your job? About your field?
- What parts of your position do you find most challenging?
- How would you describe your work environment?
- How did you get your current position?
- How do most people enter this profession?
- How did you get started in the industry? What has been your career path?
- What educational preparation would you recommend for someone who wants to advance in this field?
- What are they key challenges for the department/company?
- What are the characteristics of the people who succeed in this position?
- Who are the most important people in the industry today?
- What developments on the horizon could affect future opportunities in this field/company?
- What professional journals and organizations should I be aware of?
- Can you recommend sources for more information (specific books, trade publications, professional journals, websites, etc.)?
- What advice do you have for students who are preparing to enter your field?
- Are there other people with whom you recommend I speak? When I contact them, may I use your name?

Additional Questions

- How/why did you decide to pursue the career in which you are working?
- What was your undergraduate major? How did it help prepare you for your career? What additional training/education have you had?
- Can you recommend any courses I should take before furthering my job search?
- How can students find summer jobs or internships in your field? What other means of gaining experience before graduation would you recommend?
- Is a graduate degree important? If so, what fields of study are helpful?
- Where can someone in an entry-level position expect to be in two years? Five years? Ten years?
- Who does your company view as competitors?
- Relative to your competitors, what is your competitive advantage?
- What are the key metrics that you use to evaluate your department/business?
- What is the employment outlook in your field? Can you describe any developments that are on the horizon?
- How does the aging population affect your business?
- What are the trends affecting the industry?

Networking Meeting Record

Date:_____ Name:_____ Job Title:_____
Organization:_____E-mail:_____
Phone:_____ Referred by:_____
Key Information/Insights: _____
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Referrals (Name, Title & Contact Info): _____
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Next Steps:_____
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Date:_____ Name:_____ Job Title:_____
Organization:_____E-mail:_____
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What is LinkedIn?

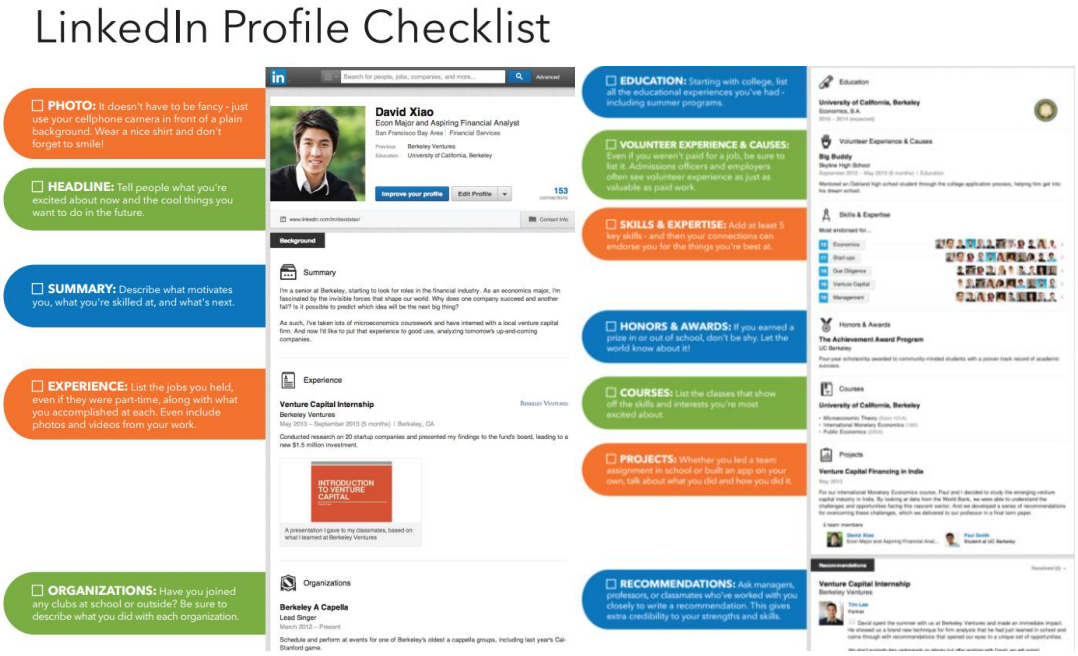
LinkedIn is a professional social media website that allows you to make connections with professionals as well as alumni from the Sage Colleges. LinkedIn allows you to establish connections, explore your career options, look for jobs, and to expand your network.

Why join LinkedIn?

- Career Search- You can do research on career paths that your connections have taken to get where they are now. Explore different groups that you can join related to your intended career field.
- Employer Internet Search- Your LinkedIn profile is most likely going to be the first thing that shows up during a search by an employer, which the majority of employers do. Having a LinkedIn profile allows you to have a very professional and appropriate representation of yourself online.
- Network- There are over 200 million users from more than 200 countries on LinkedIn, which means there are plenty of people for you to network with!
- Connect with alumni - LinkedIn provides you an awesome way to connect with alumni from The Sage Colleges. Go to www/linkedin.com/alumni to see what the alums are doing, where they are located, and what types of fields they are in. There are over 4,000 alumni from The Sage Colleges on LinkedIn currently, so you have plenty of people to network with!

How to create a profile

Go to https://students.linkedin.com/ to learn more about what you should include in your profile and check for updates and tips on how to better your LinkedIn profile on the Office of Career Planning's social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter!



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WE KNOW WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE WHEN WE SEE IT.

We also know the Sage Colleges have a history of graduating successful financial professionals like Steve Hunt from Troy, NY. Looking for an opportunity to show off your talent? E-mail Amy Babcock at amy.babcock@nm.com for more information on our Top 10 Internship or Full-Time Post-Graduate Program.

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