

Networking

Over the course of your life, networking will be the single most effective method of advancing your career. Even among Cornell graduates seeking a first position, personal contact is extremely important. Over 20% of job seekers in Cornell's Class of 2008 found their job through networking.

Build a Contact List

Networking is an active, ongoing process in which you identify people who can provide information, advice, and more contacts. Identify contacts through:

- **Cornell's Alumni Mentor Network** (in Cornell CareerNet)—provides a link to alumni who understand the Cornell experience and can offer advice on courses, transitioning to the workplace, attending graduate school, etc.
- **On-campus events**—career fairs, alumni panels and speakers, and employer information sessions.
- **Referrals**—from professors, former employers, friends, and relatives. If you mention a name familiar to a potential contact, you are more likely to gain access.
- **Affiliations**—professional and community-based organizations, fraternities and sororities, and other memberships.
- **Research**—LexisNexis, industry/trade publications, employer websites, alumni magazines, and library resources can help identify potential contacts.
- **Job-shadowing (extern) programs, internships, and summer jobs**—conducting information interviews while you're in the workplace and obtaining referrals from your supervisors and co-workers will help expand your contact list.

Arrange a Meeting or Conversation

Call or write to arrange an information interview. If you set up a meeting by telephone, prepare a brief script saying who you are, how you got the person's name, and why you are calling. When writing, you should make the same explanations and suggest that you will call to arrange a visit.

Prepare For Your conversation

Taking time to prepare thoughtful, well-informed questions will demonstrate your interest and provide an incentive for the interviewee to provide more substantive information.

Learn about the contact's career field, industry, and organization to prepare informed questions. Address issues such as education and work experience required, entry level opportunities, career paths, greatest challenges, sources of job satisfaction, short- and long-range goals of the organization and the individual, and work environment. (See sample questions on the next page.)

Follow Up and Stay in Touch

If individuals have taken the time to offer you advice, they will look forward to receiving occasional updates from you. Your goal is to keep communication lines open after the initial interview or e-mail exchange. To do that:

- **Write brief follow-up notes.** Thank the individuals for their time. State how you benefited from their advice and what actions you will take based on their suggestions.
- **Keep contacts updated** about your progress and decisions, referrals with whom you have met, etc. Inform them when you are ready to start the job search, and let them know the outcome.
- **Secure permission** before using a contact's name

When embarking on the job search, it's appropriate to ask contacts, "If you hear of an opening, would you let me know?" Ask if they will keep a copy of your resume on hand to refer to when they hear of opportunities that would interest you. Ask again for referrals to other people you could contact.

Increase Networking Success

- Ask for leads and information, not for a job.
- Do not send a resume in advance (unless requested), but be prepared to provide a copy.
- Be courteous and express your appreciation for others' time and information.
- When telephoning, ask if it's a convenient time to talk.
- Continue using other job-search methods in conjunction with networking.
- Organize your contact list. Keep a record of interviews, noting the leads you obtain and what follow-up is necessary.