Networking for Career Development

Reference Guide

'Who' you know can be just as important as 'what' you know. Building and developing professional relationships and ongoing networking, can help to increase your career profile, broaden your access to opportunities and keep up with best practice ideas. This document is designed to help Macquarie University staff members understand the purpose of networking for career development and simple actions to help network effectively.

What is networking?

Standing around at events? Striking up awkward conversations? Handing out as many business cards as possible? Whilst these may be part of networking, the key to effective networking is putting time and effort into development longer term professional relationships. It's finding people with whom you can share ideas, offer support and ask for advice.

Why network?

There are many benefits to developing your professional network, including:

- Finding people with whom you have common your interests and/or values and with whom you could potentially collaborate on projects
- Accessing the latest industry news and opportunities
- Sharing best-practice
- Learning more about your profession (or your desired profession) or your chosen field of research
- Hearing about job opportunities
- Improving your profile and reputation
- Obtaining advice and support
- Sourcing potential staff or research partners

Who's in your network?

Your network includes everyone from work colleagues to friends and family as well as members of groups to which you might belong. This includes alumni groups, sporting teams, social and interest-based groups, professional associations, religious communities, and digital networks, such as on LinkedIn or Twitter.

Review your current network

In reviewing your network, you may find it useful to organise your contacts into cohorts. One way of approaching this is the Information-Influence-Support model:

- Your **Information** network – people with whom you can gain or give information
- Your **Influence** network – people who can influence key decision makers
- Your **Support** network – people who support and encourage you or to whom you can offer support and encouragement

Another way of reviewing your existing network is to use the Operational-Personal-Strategic framework:

- **Operational** network: people on whom you rely or refer to in order to be effective in your current role
- **Personal** network: people who support and encourage you and with whom you can talk through your ups and downs, your opportunities and challenges.
- **Strategic** network: people who can provide you with a difference perspective, who can challenge your thinking and/or help you move forward with your longer term, or bigger picture, goals.

Once you have organised your contacts into their respective cohort, decide if there are any changes to your network that would help you in your career development?

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Networking fundamentals

Networking is a practice that you can develop over the span of your working life. Fundamentally it includes:

1. Building your network by connecting with people
2. Building an ongoing relationship with people you meet
3. Adding value for, and helping out, people within your network as well as asking your network for help with your goals.

Finding opportunities to network

Every interaction with another person is a potential networking opportunity. To find opportunities to interact with others, consider:

- events hosted within our university, by your professional or industry association or by social/leisure/sporting groups
- social media websites for groups of like-minded industry professionals
- attending or presenting at conferences
- alumni associations

Be visible.

Networking is a contact sport! You have to get out and connect with people.

Dr. Ivan Misner
Founder and chairman of Business Network International (BNI)

A NETWORKER'S TOOLKIT

Along your networking journey you may find the following useful:

- o **Business cards** – these are an easy way to give people your contact details
- o **Elevator pitch** – a interesting, memorable and short explanation of the work you do and/or what you are aspiring to do
- o **Follow up system** – develop a way that works for you to follow up on initial meetings with people and to keep in touch with those in your network
- o **Online presence and personal profile** – search for yourself online and make sure your digital footprint is aligned with the profile you aspire to build.

Further information

To learn more about network, refer to the following resources:

- Burkus, D. (2018) *Friend of a Friend: Understanding the Hidden Networks That Can Transform Your Life and Your Career.* Houghton Mifflan Harcourt.
- Ibarra, Herman & Hunter, Mark. (2007). "How Leaders Create and Use Networks" Harvard business review. 85. 40-7, 124.
- Build Your Network; Office of Career Services Harvard University
- https://www.engagingleader.com/el176-stop-networking-start-applying-network-science-to-transform-your-career-and-leadership-with-david-burkus/
- https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/managing-relationships/networking
- Lynda.com: Dorie Clark, author of Stand Out Networking, introduces Tips for professional networking