Networking Meetings: More Than Just Informational Interviews

Trachtenberg School
Career Development Services
Career Guide

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to Networking Meetings</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching and Contacting Individuals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for the Networking Meeting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking Meeting Nuts &amp; Bolts</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the Networking Meeting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Networking Meeting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions To Ask</strong></td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Requesting a Networking Meeting</strong></td>
<td>6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a “Warm” Contact Email</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a “Cold” Contact Email</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Request via LinkedIn</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Follow-Up email to a LinkedIn Message</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Follow-Up Email</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Thank-You Emails</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION TO NETWORKING MEETINGS

Interchangeable with the term “informational interviews,” networking meetings are a conversation with someone who is currently in a position, field, or organization of interest to you. These meetings are brief and succinct but are typically one of the most useful aspects of a successful career exploration.

RESEARCH AND CONTACT

| Research and identify occupations, companies and individuals | Research LinkedIn, job boards, potential employers, faculty and academic and professional affiliated organizations/associations
| Utilize Research Guides provided by GW’s Gelman Library:
  | Leadership Directory – [http://Io.bvdep.com](http://Io.bvdep.com) (You must be logged onto a computer within the GW network)
  | Company Information – [http://libguides.gwu.edu/company](http://libguides.gwu.edu/company)
  | Industry Information – [http://libguides.gwu.edu/industry](http://libguides.gwu.edu/industry)
  | Washington Area Company Information – [http://libguides.gwu.edu/washington](http://libguides.gwu.edu/washington)

| Request an interview | Then tap into your current network and LinkedIn connections for a “warm” contact so they can make an introduction. (See examples on page 6) Once a meeting is arranged, let the person who made the introduction know that you’ve followed up and also send them a thank you afterward for connecting with their contact.
| If there are no shared connections to the professional or organization, consider “cold” contacting the professional by writing a brief statement about yourself and your career goals. In your email or letter, think of a one-line hook that will grab the reader’s attention. (See examples on page 7)

| Research both the company and the employee | Thoroughly review the company’s website, LinkedIn page, and any articles/news about the organization and individual.
| Avoid asking questions that you could find answers to online.
| Prior to the interview, learn about the person’s background, time in the field and company, as well as any common area of interests to make a connection.

| Be prepared with notes and questions | Have notes on the organization, the individual with whom you will be speaking, and general information about the position in which the person holds.
| Use these documents to help organize your thoughts and to prepare questions to ask the person throughout the interview.

| Dress appropriately | Research the environment of the company to dress according to the culture. For example, if meeting someone from the Hill, expect to wear a suit and tie.

| Plan ahead | In advance of your meeting, pack your bag or briefcase with a padfolio and pens to take notes.
| Bring extra copies of your resume (only provide a copy if they ask to see your resume) and business cards.
### DURING AND AFTER THE NETWORKING MEETING

| **Meeting protocol** | **Greet** the employer with a **firm handshake**. First impressions MATTER!  
**Be friendly and tactful** when asking questions. Refer to the list of questions on pages 5-6.  
**Listen** and modify your questions to fit the conversation.  
**Be courteous** - when your meeting is nearing the time you have allotted, mention to the person that you are aware that you only have 5-10 minutes left. This indicates that you respect their time and also allows them to possibly continue the conversation longer.  
**Express appreciation** for their time. |
| --- | --- |
| **Send a thank-you note** | Within **one day of the interview**, send a thank-you email to the individual for meeting. If someone else helped you make the connection, also send them a thank-you email. (See examples on page 10)  
Comment on how the meeting **expanded your knowledge of the field** and cite the **follow-up steps** you plan to take. This is an effective way to keep in touch with the employer. |
| **Send LinkedIn request** | In most networking situations, it is common to request to **connect with the person on LinkedIn** after a meeting. You should personalize the message and thank them again for their time. |
| **Record, analyze, and evaluate the interview** | Maintain a list of people you have interviewed or plan to interview. Document when your conversations took place, information shared, contact suggestions and future follow-up steps needed.  
Reflect on what you observed during the meeting and how you felt in the work setting. Ask: Can I see myself working here? Why or why not? |
| **Periodically check in & follow up** | Maintain networking relationships by emailing or phoning as appropriate.  
Send a link to a current news story, information about an upcoming conference, or news of a personal accomplishment that may appeal to your contact.  
Keep your networking connections updated on your work in the field.  
Request additional connections or career advice as appropriate based on the conversation. You want to be mindful that you are planting seeds for long-term career growth so be aware of the pace and appropriateness of your “asks.” It can be helpful to ask how often they are comfortable with you reaching out to them so that they guide the frequency/level of connection. |
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Career Path:
 What drew you to this field/line of work initially?
 What encouraged your decision to make the career transition from private to non-profit sector?
 What was it like to work under Senator Jane Doe? What did you learn from your experience?
 Aside from your past experience as an AmeriCorps VISTA, what other service opportunities have you undertaken? Is service a value in which your organization promotes?
 Your jump from Program Consultant to Director of Company X in only 3 months was an incredible accomplishment. What led to this career transition?
 What skills did you learn from serving in the United States Navy, and how do you apply these skills in your current position as the Director of Recruiting and Training for Company X?

“A Day In the Life”:
 What aspect of your job do you find most engaging? Least engaging?
 What is your typical day (week) like in your position?
 What surprises you most about this job?
 What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these?
 What kinds of skills and abilities do you think are needed for this type of work? Are there specific types of people that you think thrive in this line of work?
 What kind of challenges do you deal with on a daily basis?
 What kinds of decisions do you need to make on your job? Who is involved with this decision making?

Organizational Culture:
 What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in your current job? Do people usually transition to another position within your organization or move on to another employer?
 What kind of movement is most common here in the company’s internal professional development? Lateral, Upward? What does it take to be promoted in this company?
 Could you talk more about work/life fit? How does your job affect your life?
 Can you describe the work environment in your organization in terms of individual effort vs. teamwork, pressure, deadlines, workload, etc.?
 This past month, you have presented several times at local institutions on your policy work in Uganda. Are you encouraged by your organization to publish and/or speak about your research?

Tailored to Company/Field:
 What types of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
 Where is the company headed in the next 5 years?
 What are some trends or challenges that are most impacting your organization right now?
 How do you see your industry changing in the next 10 years?
I've read through the company's mission statement and values, but could you share how you see that played out on the job?

What do you think are the company's biggest successes? In your opinion, what does the company do really well?

Was the recent USAID grant I heard that your organization received part of a new initiative or to expand existing programs? What impact do you see this having on the direction of your agency?

Based on current events, how did your organization deal with the sequestration?

The recent merger with Company X expanded the organization. Based on this merger, do you foresee the opening of new markets or greater globalization? Building of new facilities or products?

According to The Washington Post, since you have been with ABC Industries, the clientele has increased by 62%. Can you describe the strategies implemented to reach this achievement?

How did the organization’s recent move from New York City to Alexandria, VA impact operations?

**Advice for Breaking into the Field:**

What training or education is needed to get started in the field? What is helpful for advancing?

What skills should I focus on acquiring or refining in order to be successful? OR In your experience, what are the must-have top 3 skills needed by someone looking to be successful in this industry?

What are some of the ways I can become more familiar with this field? Are there conferences/associations/resources you’d suggest?

What do you read — in print and online — to keep up with developments in your field?

If you were starting out now, how would you get into this field? What strategies would you use to get your foot in the door? What advice would you give to someone in my position?

What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?

Do you know anyone else I can speak to for advice about breaking into this field?

**Next Steps:**

If you had a chance to do it all over again, what would you have done differently?

Is there anything I haven’t asked about that you’d think would be helpful for me to know?

Would it be all right if I kept in touch with you? How would you prefer that I keep in touch?

Is there anyone else you think I should talk to as I continue to gather information?
REQUESTING A NETWORKING MEETING

CONTACTING “WARM” CONNECTIONS (PEOPLE YOU KNOW)

SUBJECT: Met you at APPAM conference + request for informational interview

Hi Ron,

It was so nice to meet you at the APPAM conference last week -- we chatted after Kathy’s workshop (as a refresher, I'm a MPP student at GW).

I want to follow up to request an informational interview to learn more about your company and the path that led you to this work. I'm interested in working in the environmental policy field and would like to explore potential opportunities to collaborate.

I would be delighted to have a chance to connect with you either in person or over the phone. Please let me know if you have any availability over the next few weeks. I’m usually free in the morning.

Thanks for your consideration!

Erin

SUBJECT: Following up from conference + scheduling a time to meet

Hi Caitlin,

It was great to meet you yesterday and I'm glad to be connected with you on LinkedIn! I really enjoyed that conference -- the break-out workshops, in particular.

I'd love to swing by your office or grab coffee or lunch sometime soon. I'm interested to hear more about your career path and the work you do at Johns Hopkins University.

Do you have any availability over the next few weeks? I'm happy to work around your schedule.

Looking forward,

Jason

SUBJECT: Following up from GW/TSPPPA dinner + request for quick call

Hi Megan,

I enjoyed meeting you last night at the “Dinner with Alum” GW event. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us!

It was very helpful to hear about your work in the Loudon County Department of Management and Budget. I’m planning to move to Richmond after graduation - do you have advice regarding opportunities to work on the local level there?

If you have time for a quick phone call, I’d love to ask a few follow-up questions. I’m free all day this Friday and next.

Thanks!

Danielle
GETTING INTRODUCED THROUGH A CONNECTION

If someone offers for you to use their name as a way of introduction, here’s an email example:

From: Megan
To: Lisa Genest
CC: John

Subject: Referred by John Podolsky

Dear Ms. Genest,

John Podolsky recommended I contact you. He thought very highly of you and encouraged me to reach out to ask about your experience as a policy analyst. I’m a second year student in the Trachtenberg School’s MPP program at GW, and I would like to be a policy analyst in the federal government. I’d love to chat with you for 20 minutes about your experience.

Are you available for coffee or to speak sometime next week? My schedule is fairly open on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and I’d be delighted to come by your office to talk.

Best,
Megan Jones

Also, make sure to send John a thank you for the introduction AND after you’ve met with the person (see thank-you note examples on page 10).

If someone sends an introduction on your behalf, here’s an example of a follow-up e-mail:

From: Megan
To: Jason
BCC: Anne

Thanks for the introduction, Anne (moving you to the BCC line).

Jason, it’s great to meet you. As Anne mentioned, I’m getting my MPP. I’m in my second year and considering policy analyst positions. I’d love to talk with you about your experiences in the field.

Do you have time for a 20-minute phone call next week? I’m generally available on Wednesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. I can work around your schedule.

Thanks for your consideration,
Megan Jones
CONTACTING “COLD” CONNECTIONS (PEOPLE YOU DON’T KNOW)

SUBJECT: GWU MPP Student Seeking Advice

Dear Mr. Shafer,

After reading about your success expanding foreign relations with China in The New York Times, I investigated your organization further to learn more about its plans for global expansion. As a graduate student studying public policy at The George Washington University, I’m currently exploring careers that merge my passion for foreign affairs and diplomacy. With a strong desire to learn more about organizations and positions that oversee the policies for a given region of the world, I would love to connect with you to learn more about your position as a Foreign Affairs Specialist at Company ABC.

I imagine your schedule is very busy and would greatly value any insight you could offer. If you have time to speak with me over the phone or in person, I would be very appreciative. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Alison Tinson
alisontinson@email.com
202-123-4567
www.linkedin.com/in/alisontinson

SUBJECT: GWU Student Seeking Advice on International Development/USAID

Dear Mr. Shafer,

As a graduate student at George Washington’s Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, I am focusing on international development and your insights into USAID’s Democracy and Governance programs would be extremely helpful.

Do you have 20 minutes to answer some questions about your experience at USAID? I know this may be a busy time of year, so please let me know how I can accommodate you.

Thank you for your time,
Alison

SUBJECT: GWU student seeking to connect about your work at the Urban Institute

Dear Erin,

I am a MPP student at GW and found your profile in the Trachtenberg School alumni group on LinkedIn. My focus is on economic policy – I have admired and utilized the research of the Urban Institute during my coursework.

I would love to hear more about how you started working in the field and what skills you believe are most relevant to the profession.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat about your experience? I would be happy to meet you at your office or a convenient coffee shop. I’m generally available on Mondays and Thursdays.

Thank you for your consideration,
Alison
CONTACTING PEOPLE VIA LINKEDIN

You can send a “cold” contact message (as featured on page 7) to a LinkedIn group member without being connected, but there are limits:

1. You can send 15 free 1:1 group messages to fellow group members each month. This limit is set for all the groups you belong to and not for each group individually. If you go over the limit, you’ll see an error message until the next month begins.
2. You have to be a member of a group for at least 4 days.
3. You have to be a member of LinkedIn for at least 30 days in order to send messages to fellow group members.

If you want to send a “cold” contact message to someone with whom you’re not connected on LinkedIn, you have to compose that message in a text box after clicking on the “Connect” button.

It will encourage you to customize that invitation, but it’s important to note that there is a 300 character limit, so you have to keep the message very short. Some examples are below:

Dear Mr. Shafer,

As a graduate student at GW’s Trachtenberg School, I’m focusing on international development. Your insights into USAID’s Democracy and Governance programs would be extremely helpful.

Do you have 20 minutes to answer some questions about your experience?

Thank you,

Alison

Dear Erin,

My focus is on economic policy - I have admired and utilized the research of the Urban Institute. I’m currently pursuing my MPP at GW while working full-time.

Do you have 20 minutes to answer some questions about your experience? I’m generally free on Mondays and Fridays.

Best,

Josh

Dear Mary,

I’m a MPA student at GW and found your profile via a shared connection. I’m interested in your career path from non-profit management to Deloitte.

I’d love to hear more about your experience changing fields. Do you have 20 minutes to chat?

Thanks for your consideration,

Martin

Dear Alisha,

As a graduate MPA student at GW and professional in the field, I’m interested to learn more about your work at McKinsey & Company in the Atlanta office. I’m considering relocating to that area after graduation.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat by phone in the next two weeks?

Best,

Mike
WHAT TO DO WHEN PEOPLE DON’T RESPOND ON LINKEDIN

Sometimes individuals accept your request to connect on LinkedIn, but miss the personalized note you sent in the message or they might not notice/respond to your direct/In Mail LinkedIn message.

This can happen when people view LinkedIn on their phones or on their desktop due to the updated appearance of the “Received Invitations” page.

In that case, you should search for the individual’s work email (Google search, check the organization’s website, call the main number of the organization to ask for their email, etc.) and send a follow-up message.

If you are already connected on LinkedIn, when you click on the person’s profile, look for the “Contact and Personal Info” tab on the right. Click on “Show more” for the drop-down box, which should include email address and sometimes other info like social media profiles and company website.

Follow-up Email Examples:

**SUBJECT: Following up on LinkedIn connection + scheduling a time to meet**

Dear Mary,

Great to connect with you on LinkedIn! I just wanted to follow up on the message I sent as I’d love to hear more about your experience shifting from federal to state government. Do you have 15-20 minutes to chat in the next few weeks?

Thanks for your consideration,

Martin
LinkedIn.com/MartinShort007

**SUBJECT: Following up on LinkedIn message + request for quick call**

Dear Alisha,

Hope this message finds you well! I wanted to follow up on my LinkedIn message about finding a time to connect about your work at McKinsey & Company. As a graduate student in public policy who just completed a summer consulting internship, I’m very interested in learning more about the skills and experience needed to be successful in public sector consulting.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat by phone in the next two weeks? My schedule is flexible so I can easily accommodate your availability.

Best,

Mike
LinkedIn.com/MikeBrady
How long should I wait if I do not hear back from an individual?

Give the employer **seven to ten days** to reply to your original response. If you still do not hear from the person after this window of time, “reply” to the original email to inquire if a meeting can be established. By replying to the original email, the person you are contacting can reference your initial inquiry. See example below.

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**Requesting an Initial Meeting: Following up with an Individual**

Dear Mr. Pact,

I hope all is well. I just wanted to send you a quick note to follow up on the email I sent last week (copied below) to see if we might be able to arrange a time soon for a brief 20-minute meeting.

I can be reached via email at amandabrown@email.com or via phone at 202-123-4567.

Best wishes,
Amanda Brown

On Fri, Jan 18, 2014 at 9:33 AM, Amanda Brown <amandabrown@email.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Pact,

Your colleague Joseph Jordan, Senior Healthcare Analyst, for whom I interned last semester, suggested I reach out to you based on my professional interest to support the implementation of the Affordable Care Act’s marketplace and your current work in this field. I am very interested in learning more about the intersection of policy and practice on the local level with the implementation of the ACA.

As my schedule is flexible, I would be happy to work around yours to establish a meeting. The best method to contact me is via email at amandabrown@email.com or you can reach me by phone at 202-123-4567.

Thanks so much for your time.

All the best,
Amanda Brown

www.linkedin.com/in/amandabrown
THANKING YOUR NEW CONTACT

While it is most common to send a short email thank you message (which allows the contact to respond and continue the conversation), in some cases, you might opt to send a brief handwritten thank-you note by mail (in addition to the email) which has a more personal touch.

**SUBJECT: Thank you!**

Hi Melanie,

Thank you for your time -- I enjoyed our meeting and hearing more about your work and career path.

I'd be delighted to find ways to work together to support your team’s housing policy initiatives. Once the new Policy Analyst position becomes available, I'd be interested in learning more about that role and discussing my qualifications.

Have a great weekend!
Robert

**SUBJECT: Thank you for your time!**

Hi Ed,

Thank you for taking the time to speak about your role at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute and your advice on expanding my policy work at the local level. I enjoyed our conversation and found it extremely informative. In particular, I joined the DC Fair Budget Coalition as a result of your recommendation.

Warmest,
Alison

**SUBJECT: Thank you for our meeting!**

Hi Sue,

I really appreciated the opportunity to meet with you. I found your insight, information, and advice very helpful.

I'd love to connect with your contact at ICF International when you have a moment to pass along her contact information. I also plan to check out the Young Professionals in Foreign Policy association.

I look forward to staying in touch--
Elisa

THANKING THE PERSON WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO NEW CONTACT

Hi Caitlin,

Thanks for the introduction to Melanie! We had a productive conversation – she’s a terrific resource. It was also nice to hear more about your previous work together.

I appreciate your input on how to tailor my application for LMI. I’ll keep you posted on that process.

All best,
Robert