Networking Meetings: More Than Just Informational Interviews

Trachtenberg School
Career Development Services
Career Guide

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Trachtenberg School of Public Policy & Public Administration
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
# NETWORKING MEETING GUIDE

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Understanding the Networking Meeting
Interchangeable with the term “informational interviews,” Networking Meetings are a conversation between YOU and another individual 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 job search strategy.

As a Result of a Networking Meeting, You Will:

- Gain information on a career field of interest and skills necessary to succeed
- Add to your career network by connecting with managers, supervisors, and colleagues
- Learn about the realities of the job as well as of position openings that are not being advertised with the company or in the field

Getting Started: Identifying a Connectic

Step One: Research potential occupations and companies that fit your career interests

- Look up organizations and job titles through LinkedIn, use resource books from the TSPPPA Career Services Library, search job boards, and utilize your academic and professional affiliated organizations/associations

- Utilize Research Guides provided by the Gelman Library at The George Washington University:
  - Leadership Directory – http://lo.bvdep.com (You must be logged onto a computer within the GW network)
    http://find.galegroup.com/menu/commonmenu.do?userGroupName=wash74137
  - Company Information – http://libguides.gwu.edu/company
  - Industry Information – http://libguides.gwu.edu/industry
  - Washington Area Company Information – http://libguides.gwu.edu/washington

Step Two: Identify people to interview

- Start with lists of people you know (friends, fellow students, present or former co-workers, supervisors, professors, GW Alumni, professional organizations, etc.)

- Search organization’s website and directory

- LinkedIn Connections (TSPPPA and GW LinkedIn Groups)
The Networking Meeting is a Continuous Cycle:

Networking Meeting  ➔  Know  ➔  Network  ➔  Reach out to others.

Ask for additional introductions if relevant and appropriate.

NETWORKING MEETING NUTS & BOLTS

Preparing for the Networking Meeting

Check off that you completed the following

| Request an Interview | ▪ Once you have identified someone you would like to interview, determine the best way to request an interview.
▪ Consider *tapping into your current network* and LinkedIn connections for a “warm” contact so they can make an introduction. Once a meeting is arranged, let the person who connected you know and also send 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 pages six and seven.) |
| 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 the answers to online.
▪ Prior to the interview, you should know the person’s background, length of time in the field and with the company, as well as any common area of interests that could be *used 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 *pad folio* and a *couple of working pens* to take notes.
▪ Bring *extra copies of your resume and business cards*. |
**During the Networking Meeting**
Guidelines for Success

- Greet the employer with a firm handshake. First impressions MATTER!
- Be friendly and tactful when asking questions. Refer to the list of questions on page 5.
- 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.

**REMEMBER:**
The purpose of networking meetings is to **plant the seeds for long-term career planning**. By conducting them, you will **build your knowledge** and increase **connections in the field**.

**After the Networking Meeting**
Check off that you completed the following

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<th>Send a Thank You Note</th>
<th>Within <strong>one day of the interview</strong>, thank the individual for meeting. If someone else helped you make the connection, also send them a thank you email.</th>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>If appropriate, request to <strong>connect with the person on LinkedIn</strong>.</td>
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<td>Record, Analyze, and Evaluate the Interview</td>
<td><strong>Maintain a list</strong> 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.</td>
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<td><strong>Reflect</strong> on what you observed during the meeting and how you felt in the work setting. <strong>Ask:</strong> Can I see myself working here? Why or why not?</td>
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<td>Periodically Check-in &amp; Follow Up</td>
<td><strong>Maintain networking relationships</strong> by emailing or phoning as appropriate.</td>
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<td>Send a link to a <strong>current news story</strong>, information about an <strong>upcoming conference</strong>, or <strong>news of a personal accomplishment</strong> that may appeal to your contact.</td>
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<td>Remember to keep your networking connections <strong>updated on your work in the field</strong>.</td>
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QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do your homework:
Do not waste your time asking questions that you can find the answers to online. Take the time to thoroughly research the person with whom you are meeting, the affiliated organization, and position descriptions within the field. Use this research to craft your questions.

Sample Generic Questions:

- What aspect of your job do you find most engaging? Least engaging?
- What drew you to this field/line of work initially?
- What is your typical day (week) like in your position?
- 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 is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you currently hold? Do people usually transition to another position within your organization or move on to another employer?
- Could you talk more about work/life fit?
- What training or education is needed to get started in the field? What is helpful for advancing?
- Can you describe the work environment in your organization in terms of individual effort vs. teamwork, pressure, deadlines, workload, etc.?
- What do you see as possible next steps for you? What career expectations do you have in the short and long term?
- What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these skills?
- What are some of the ways I can become more familiar with this field? Are there conferences/associations you’d suggest?
- 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?
- Do you know anyone else I can speak to for advice about breaking into this field?

Sample Tailored Questions

- Was the recent USAID Grant I heard that you’re 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?
- 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?
- What encouraged your decision to make the career transition from private sector to the non-profit sector?
- Based on current events, how did your organization deal with the sequestration? What were the short and long term effects?
- 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?
- The recent merger with Company X greatly 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 to impact operations?
- This past month, you have presented several times at local institutions including The George Washington University on your policy work in Uganda. Are you encouraged by your organization to publish and/or speak about your research?
Example One:

Dear Ms. Genest:

A colleague of mine, Ms. Lisa Podolsky, who previously interned for your office as a policy and evaluation analyst, suggested that I contact you to request a meeting. When speaking with Ms. Podolsky at a recent luncheon, she mentioned that you are an experienced Policy Analyst who may be able to provide me with insight about the field.

I am currently a second-year graduate student at The George Washington University studying Public Policy within the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration. My career passion is to one day serve as a Policy Analyst for the federal government. Presently, I am in the process of exploring various career opportunities, and your dynamic background and knowledge of public policy will be instrumental to me as I better define my career goals.

At your convenience, I would like to schedule a 20–25 minute meeting with you to gather additional information that will better assist me with my career decisions. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Monsky
514 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
November 10, 2013

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 in the near future to acquire more information 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, in person or even by email, I would be very appreciative. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Alison Tinson
200 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
E: alisontinson@email.com
P: 202-123-4567
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.

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 twenty 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, who I interned for 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.

After two years as a Community AmeriCorps Fellow where I launched new public health programs for three local community health centers, I am now obtaining a Masters in Public Administration with a health policy concentration. 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