

# Networking & Informational Interviewing

## Networking—the practice of asking everyone you can for advice and job leads.

One of the most **POWERFUL JOB SEARCH TOOLS** you can use is **NETWORKING**. Many studies show it is the #1 way college students secure jobs. This can be done with people you know, or with people you don't know, in order to expand your network.

You can use networking at many levels of college and your career to:

- ◆ Explore careers and better identify what you might want to do
- ◆ Find internships or summer jobs
- ◆ Identify employers you might want to work for
- ◆ Tap into the "hidden" job market (Did you know 80% of all jobs are never advertised anywhere?)
- ◆ Learn about an employer prior to preparing a resume or interviewing

## Preparing to Network

- ◆ Know yourself - Especially your skills and what you have to offer. If you need help you might talk to a Career Counselor, or ask people you know, including previous employers, what they think your strengths are.
- ◆ Research, as much as possible, what career fields and types of employers interest you. Resources for "researching" include: Career Counselors, the Career Center Resources Room (NHW 132), HSU & public libraries, faculty members, and of course, the World Wide Web.

## Making Contacts: With People You Know

1. Make a list of people you know who:
  - ◆ May be able to offer advice on careers, or how to do your job search.
  - ◆ May know someone with connections to employers which may interest you.
  - ◆ Are working in the field or in related fields. This list might include:

-Relatives, friends, neighbors	-Classmate	-People you met during internships & summer jobs
-Career Center advisors	-Faculty members	-Members of on-campus or community organizations
2. Starting your contacts with people you know will help build confidence to prepare you for talking with strangers. Always have an introduction and clear purpose in mind when making the contact. Writing a "script" ahead of time may be helpful. Here is an example:

"Hello, Mr. Jones, this is Jane Doe. I'm getting ready to graduate in May and I am starting my job search. I'm interested in a career in \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm also exploring \_\_\_\_\_. Would it be possible to meet with you for a few minutes to ask some questions and get your advice on planning my career? (or starting my job search)?"
3. Write out questions that hone in on your information needs. Your contacts can provide you with industry-specific information, offer advice about job-search strategies or link you to people in your target occupations. (Ideas for questions can be taken from the Informational Interviewing Section below).
4. Ask for other people you can talk to who may be able to offer advice.

## Contacts with People You Don't Know: Informational Interviewing

1. Being referred to a person in a "target career" by someone you know is a great way to get a "foot-in-the-door", and to get past secretaries. Here is an example of one approach:

"Hello, Ms. Smith. My name is John Doe. I'm a friend of Bill Jones who suggested I call you. I will be graduating from Humboldt State University next year with a major in \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm considering a career in \_\_\_\_\_. Bill thought you would be willing to give me some information on the profession. I wonder if you might have a ½ hour sometime in the near future to talk with me. I'd really appreciate the opportunity to discuss some specific questions with you."

2. If you don't have a referral, you can locate an appropriate person through several methods:
  - ♦ Consult a Career Counselor in the Career Center.
  - ♦ Consult the yellow pages of the telephone directory.
  - ♦ Contact an organization indirectly to obtain the name, title, and phone number of someone in a department of interest.
  - ♦ Use professional societies, especially their membership directories, for names of people in locations that interest you.
3. Many people are receptive to "cold calls" from students asking for career advice. Your telephone call might go like this: "Hello, Ms. Supervisor? This is Sam Student. I'm a student at Humboldt State University, and I'm interested in knowing more about careers in \_\_\_\_\_. I wondered if you would have a few minutes to talk with me about your job and careers in \_\_\_\_\_. You would? That's great. I could come to your office on Friday morning if that's convenient. What time would be good for you?"
4. Prepare for your interview by researching that employer and related ones in advance. Also, always prepare by writing down the questions you would like to ask. Remember: your job is to uncover information that will aid you in deciding what you want to do, so prepare questions that will yield helpful answers. For example, you might ask about:

### Job Duties:

- ♦ How would you describe a "typical" work day?
- ♦ What are your usual hours and days of work?
- ♦ How much and what type of responsibility is required in your work?
- ♦ What stresses and tensions do you encounter in what you do?
- ♦ What degree of independence and freedom do you have in your work?
- ♦ What opportunities exist for the expression of creativity or imagination?

### Job Satisfaction:

- ♦ What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- ♦ How would you evaluate your job security?
- ♦ How would you rate your level of prestige and status in what you do?
- ♦ In your opinion, what are the disadvantages and advantages in your occupation?
- ♦ What are the average earnings in this field? Starting--Average--Top?
- ♦ What is the future job outlook in your field?
- ♦ What are the present opportunities for advancement?

### Qualifications And How To Get Them?

- ♦ What are the major qualifications for success in this particular occupation?
- ♦ What kind of physical demands are required in the work that you do?
- ♦ What education and/or training have you had and which courses have helped you most in your job?
- ♦ What things did you do before you entered this occupation?
- ♦ Which have been most helpful?
- ♦ Other than your education or training experience, what did you find most helpful in getting your job?
- ♦ How can I get some experience?

### And Other Questions:

- ♦ What sort of changes are occurring in your occupation?
  - ♦ How does a person progress in your field?
  - ♦ What is the best way to enter this occupation?
  - ♦ Who else could give me information about this field? (Inside or outside of the company)
  - ♦ What major challenges is your organization facing?
  - ♦ What are the key short-term and long-term problems to be solved here?
5. Be sure to arrive on time for your appointment. Know the name of your resource person, and introduce yourself again. Explain that you would like to ask some questions about his/her job/occupation and begin.  
**NOTE:** Sometimes, successful information-gathering interviews occur on a "drop-in" basis. If you do drop by, don't be disappointed if the right person isn't available to see you, but do talk with anyone who happens to be there (secretaries, president of the board, etc.).
  6. Some cautions:
    - ♦ Try to talk with two or three people in a given field; everyone's perceptions, job situations, opinions, etc. will be somewhat different.
    - ♦ This is not a referral to a job opening, so don't expect to be offered a job--you are simply "window shopping."
  7. Other tips:
    - ♦ Always keep a record of the people you talked with and your perceptions.
    - ♦ Always thank the person for his/her time and send a brief thank you note later. You are building a list of future ♦  
 Set up a timetable of when to make your contacts, starting with easier ones. Develop a system of holding yourself accountable so you won't procrastinate or become intimidated by possible rejection.
    - ♦ Following up with your contact is very important, perhaps contacting them on a regular basis.