

Virtual networking

Virtual networking

Believe it or not, virtual networking doesn't have to be uncomfortable and can be just as productive as networking in person.

This worksheet complements the information and exercises in the 'how to job search and network while social distancing' webinar.

Establish your goals

- What questions do you hope to answer through networking?
- What information, knowledge, insight, or opinions can another person offer?
- What is most meaningful about your academic, personal, and/or professional experience(s) that you can share with others?
- What is your goal for networking? Why is it important?

Prepare your approach

Expand your comfort zone

- Investigate people on LinkedIn and Ten Thousand Coffees with whom you can arrange an informational interview.
- If you're preparing for a virtual networking event, research those whom you'd like as potential contacts.
- Create a professional introduction email template that you can use for cold contacts. Tailor these to individual recipients.
- Just as you would in a face-to-face event, a virtual networking opportunity requires that you prepare your 30-second introduction.
- Prepare questions you'll be asking at the meeting. Check out the sample questions on pages 2 and 3 to help you get started.
- Create a spreadsheet to record who you met, information you learned from that person, as well as other people the interviewer may have alerted you to learn more about.

Act on your plan

- We encourage you to turn your video on so the employer knows you're engaged in the conversation, but keep your microphone muted during the session.
- If for any reason you need to walk away from the camera, turn the camera off.
- Be sure that your attire and appearance are professional.
- Consider the placement of your video camera. If possible, try to have it positioned straight on.
- Consider what appears behind you. Make sure the space is neutral or professional.
- Do not work on your computer while attending a webinar.

Keep in mind

- 1) Situational awareness: your ability to read a situation and adapt to it can help you identify the timing of when to approach someone.
- 2) Quantity vs. quality: it's not about how many people you meet, but about who and the quality of the interaction.
- 3) Listen: have questions to ask, but also be prepared to listen. Actively listen.

Closing

Send a follow-up email/message to thank the person for their time. If appropriate, express the desire to reconnect in the future.

Sample questions

Questions an industry professional may ask

- Tell me about yourself.
- What kind of work/extracurricular/volunteer experience have you been involved in?
- What are your short-term career goals?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- What kind of company are you interested in working for? Why?
- What is important to you about your first job? Why?
- What are you most proud of?

Questions to ask a professional at an event or coffee chat

- What was your first position out of school and how did you secure it?
- How did you get into this field? Were there any lucky breaks that presented themselves? If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path?
- What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- Which professional journals and publications should I be reading to learn about this field? Are there any other written materials that you suggest I read?
- Which professional organizations associated with this career would you recommend I join?
- In what areas do you see the organization expanding?
- Do you foresee the opening of new markets or greater globalization?
- Do you predict development of new products and/or services? Building of new facilities?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields/jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a decision?
- What advice do you have for a student seeking to qualify for this position?
- What skills have you found most essential for success? Could you tell me one main challenge of this position? What do you enjoy most about this position?
- How much autonomy do you have at work? How is your performance evaluated? How many hours a week do you work on average? Are there professional development opportunities available?
- What advice do you wish you had when you were starting out?
- Is there anyone else you think I should speak with?