
**Rotman
Commerce**

Building your network



Rotman Commerce
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Building your network

Creating connections

Authentic connections within your personal and professional networks is one of your most valuable assets as you engage in your job search. According to research, only about 20 per cent of jobs are filled through external hiring. This means that around 80 per cent of available jobs, the vast majority, are never posted externally as they are often filled through network connections. This means networking should play a key role in your job search strategy, alongside your resume, cover letter, and skill development.

Networking allows you to be curious during informational interviews and it provides access to a wide range of job opportunities you might not have learned about otherwise. Through networking you learn more about yourself and how you see yourself in the world of work.

Authentic networking

- Stay up to date on all the information sessions, Employer Treks, special programming, workshops, and special events happening at the Rotman Commerce Career Centre.
- Get involved with associations, events, and clubs that align with your interests and values.
- Set up touch points with contacts within the industry. These can be through coffee chats or introductions, or more structured information sessions.

You can also register for one of the many career fairs happening in and around Toronto. This is a great way to meet potential employers and colleagues virtually or in person. Below are a few examples of fairs:

- [Canada Job Expo New Grad Expo](#)
- [The National Job Fair](#)
- [Hire Canada](#)
- [Study and Go Abroad](#)
- [Practice your elevator pitch](#)
- [U of T - Career Fairs](#)

Cultivating your personal network

When cultivating your personal network, it is best to start with your current network. Express your goals and interests to your relatives, friends, former colleagues, classmates, peers, and Rotman Commerce alumni. Inquire with members of your network about individuals they may know in your target industry/companies/roles. It is always best to conduct some preliminary research before asking for a contact as it will help provide guidance and direction to those in your network.

- **Uncover your network:** Compile a list of everyone in your circles who could possibly serve as a contact. Sources may include classmates, alumni, colleagues, former managers, family, friends, professors, professional organizations, volunteer/community involvement, and social media. Don't restrict yourself—at this stage, you need to cast the widest net possible. ([tip sheet available](#))
- **Be prepared:** Approach networking opportunities with a goal, which means you have done your homework. When attending events that provide an opportunity to expand your network, find out who will be attending, and conduct research on their backgrounds and prepare a few questions in advance.
- **Stay organized:** It's important to keep track of people you've met through different networking activities. Particularly, those who you are interested in staying connected to. Keeping track of contact information, job title, circumstance of the meeting, and any subsequent conversations can prompt thoughtful ice-breakers. LinkedIn is a great tool to compliment this process.

Offer to help others

Remember that networking may not immediately result in a position and should be approached for the purpose of building authentic connections to help guide you along your career journey. Offering to help someone can often build a stronger and mutually beneficial relationship.

Following up and staying connected

It is always a good practice to send a thank you note after a meeting. Highlight what you learned from the conversation and how you would like to stay connected. Mention something that was said during the conversation to show that you were listening and consider sending information that may be of value to them (industry-related news, conferences, articles, etc.).

Career Centre networking events

Several events offered through the Career Centre, whether virtually or in person, are designed to help you connect with industry professionals and alumni in fields related to your program or interests. You'll be able to get the inside scoop from professionals working in the field, representing a wide range of organizations in different sectors. These are great opportunities to expand your network which will be a valuable experience as you move forward along your career path.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Assess the event and if it speaks to your interests:** Be selective in the events you attend as there can be quite a lot of them hosted during peak recruitment season. Make sure to research the list of employer contacts and companies that will be present to make the most of the event.
- **Elevator pitch:** Know how you'll introduce yourself in 30 seconds or less, but don't just give your name and field of study – share your interests and motivations for attending the event (or talking to them).
- **Follow up promptly:** Prioritize with whom you want to follow up and don't wait too long; be sure to email or connect with the people you meet at an event over LinkedIn or through email within a few days letting them know how you met them.
- **Remember your ABC's:** ABC stands for "Always Be Considerate".

Networking in the workplace

In the workplace it's quite natural to develop relationships with people, and sometimes those relationships can last a lifetime. It's important to you personally and professionally to have work peer relationships, even if they don't last beyond this job. In fact, connections within your workplace can lead to gaining new skills and competencies through cross training, exposure to mentorship opportunities, and stronger feeling of belonging to the organization.

Networking with alumni

One of the advantages of being a Rotman Commerce student is your access to our extensive alumni network. Rotman Commerce organizes several events and programs, such as the Alumni Mentorship Program that allow current students to learn from our alumni's expertise.

Informational interviews and coffee chats

These are informal meetings (often referred to by professionals as "coffee chats") with potential decision makers, alumni, and employees within your target companies. These conversations will allow you to learn more about roles(s) from employees' first-hand experience and to evaluate if the company is a good match for your interests and values. This is a good first step for any new connections you have acquired through other channels.

Exclusive to Rotman Commerce - Alumni coffee breaks

Alumni Coffee Breaks match volunteer alumni with a small group of students (from any study year) for informal conversation. Alumni are encouraged to share experiences and provide general guidance.

Informational interview tips:

- Treat your networking coffee chats as you would any meeting – come prepared! Think about what makes you interested in talking to this contact and frame your questions from a place of curiosity. Do research on the company or individual as well as it could help guide the questions you ask.
- Take notes during and/or after each meeting so you can recall and follow up on any specifics later (both professional and personal) and follow up with a LinkedIn connection request if you aren't already connected.

- Rotman Commerce Student Associations will often bring in guest speakers and alumni to share their industry experience, so they are a great pool of contacts to reach out to.
- Check out Board of Trade events, professional associations, and industry conferences for other networking opportunities. Charity Village has an excellent list of professional associations.

Following up and staying connected

After meeting with a networking contact, it is a good practice to send a quick thank you note either on LinkedIn or email. This imparts your gratitude to that contact and ensures that you are keeping the lines of communications open past the initial meeting. Refer specifically to the content of your conversation and make sure to express your appreciation—everyone, no matter the level of their career, likes to know their time is valued.