

Networking 101



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What is Networking?

Networking is speaking and interacting with people to exchange information. Professional networking means developing and maintaining contacts with professionals who may be helpful to your career exploration and development.



Why Should You Network?

Many of us, when first exploring or entering a field, don't have family members or friends in that line of work. By networking you can meet professionals who can provide you with the information you need to choose a career that is right for you, as well as introduce you to others in the field. Introductions can then lead to better knowledge about a career, internships, and even job offers.

Through networking, you can:

- Decide whether a career is the right fit for you
- Explore internship and job options
- Build experience interacting with professionals
- Learn what skills and qualifications are needed to compete in a field
- Develop a list of job search contacts
- Receive expert advice on interviewing, your resume and/or portfolio
- Learn about a job or internship before it is advertised
- Receive valuable job hunting advice from insiders in the field
- Be offered an internship, job shadow or an interview for a job
- Build a network of people who will enjoy mentoring you

Who Can I Network With?

Networking can take place in both formal and informal settings. Be open to the possibilities. You could learn about a job from the person ahead of you in line in a coffee shop, be offered an internship during a job shadow, or make a lifelong professional contact at BSU's Internship & Job Fair.



Your Potential Networking Pool

Networking at Home

- Your dentist or doctor
- Your hairdresser
- Your mechanic
- A friend of the family
- Your former or current boss
- Members of your religious group
- Relatives
- Facebook friends
- Co-workers
- Gym partner
- Co-participants in community service
- Attendees at conferences or events

Networking at Bridgewater State University

- Faculty and staff
- Classmates
- Student organizations and clubs
- BSU Alumni Mentor Program
- CareerLink@BSU
- Job Shadow Program
- Internship & Job Fair
- Annual Job Fair
- BSU alumni on LinkedIn.com
- Practice Interview Program
- Resume Referral Program
- On Campus Interviewing
- Education Career Fair Market

The Informational Interview

The informational interview is a formal interview that you conduct with a professional to gain first-hand knowledge about a field, learn about internship and job prospects and build contacts. It can be one of the most effective ways to present yourself as a future professional in a field.

There are several steps to preparing for and conducting an informational interview.

1. The Introduction

Prepare and send a letter or e-mail requesting an informational interview. The samples on pages 8-9 may be of assistance to you. You may choose to enclose a resume as well.

2. Follow-up Contact

If you have a phone number for your potential informational interviewer, you should contact him or her within a week of sending your letter or e-mail. Sample phone scripts are included on page 9.

3. The Informational Interview

Have a list of questions ready (approximately 5-6 questions for a half hour interview). See page 10 for sample questions.

Research the company and the industry, and be prepared to discuss your new found knowledge.

If you are conducting an in-person informational interview, dress professionally, show up on time and bring a notebook, pen, your resume and a list of questions. If you are speaking to the professional on the phone, make sure that you have chosen a quiet place to talk.

4. The Thank You Letter

Within 48 hours of the informational interview, send a letter or e-mail thanking the professional for their time. A sample of a thank you letter is on page 11.



Social Networking

Most students know about MySpace and Facebook, but did you know there are also ways to network with professionals on-line? LinkedIn.com is a well known site among professionals seeking to network. Other sites such as Twitter and Meetup.com can be used to search for individuals who share your career interests.

The following tips will provide you with a polished and professional image on-line.

Be selective.

As the on-line world continues to expand, networking opportunities on the web also grow. Whether you graduated from a particular high school, enjoy hiking in the woods or like watching old movies, chances are there is a website that networks you with like-minded enthusiasts. For professional networking, choose a few sites that address your career interests or offer general professional networking as its key goal and concentrate on providing these sites with your best on-line presence.



Create a professional webpage.

Make sure your webpage on the site is professional looking, contains correct information and is free of offensive pictures and text. Check both spelling and grammar and make sure all hyperlinks work.

Be polite.

Don't send negative comments or "yell" using capital letters. Think carefully before you respond on-line and review your spelling and grammar. Comments may remain on a website a long time and you will be judged by those comments. In addition, always thank individuals for responses to your questions.

Approach individuals in a professional manner.

If you would like to request an informational interview with a professional you have met on-line, e-mail them a formal request similar to the sample on page 9 in this guide and if possible, attach your resume.



Networking with BSU Alumni Mentors

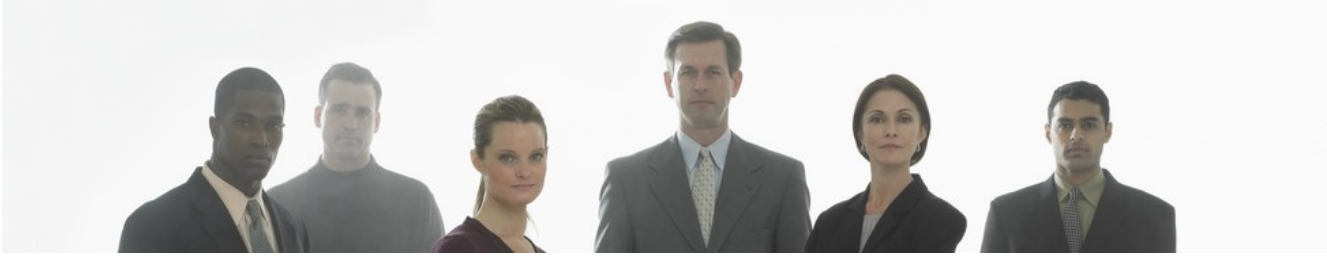
The BSU Alumni Mentor Program provides an opportunity for students to network with BSU alumni. Over 150 alumni from a wide range of careers have chosen to register for this program. They are participating in this program because they want to help you explore careers, build networking skills, and support job and internship searches. This program is one of the easiest ways for you to build your professional network and build the networking skills essential for entering the world of work.



How Do I Network with BSU Alumni Mentors?

Networking with a BSU Alumni Mentor is a very simple process.

1. Register with BSU CareerLink as a Student/Alumni: www.bridgew.edu/careerservices/careerlink.cfm
2. Once you have entered CareerLink, click on *Alumni Mentor Database*, located in the upper right hand corner of the webpage.
3. Do a Mentor Search. You can search by a range of categories including name, industry and job function.
4. Choose an Alumni Mentor whom you wish to contact. Review his or her on-line contact information.
5. Review the Networking Etiquette guidelines on page 7 in this guide.
6. Prepare an informational interview letter similar to the sample on page 8 in this guide. Please do not create a copy of the letter; create your own version.
7. Click on the *Contact Mentor* button at the top of the webpage.
8. E-mail the informational interview letter to the Alumni Mentor.
9. The Alumni Mentor will contact you to arrange an on-line, phone or in-person informational interview.
10. Prepare a list of questions. See the sample questions on page 10 in this guide as examples for the range of questions you may wish to ask the Alumni Mentor.
11. Conduct the informational interview. Be sure to thank the Alumni Mentor for their assistance.
12. Send a formal thank you letter to the Alumni Mentor. See the sample thank you letter on page 11 in this guide.



Tracking My Professional Network

The contacts you make while you are networking may provide you with assistance for weeks, months and even years. For this reason, it is important to organize and keep track of your professional network. This system can be paper or computer based but should include the professional's name, phone, e-mail and other contact information; who referred them; and a section for important comments or recommendations that they made. You should make periodic contact with your professional network to keep them updated on your career exploration and development progress.

Networking System Sample

Name	Contact Info	Referral	Comments



- Conduct yourself in an ethical and professional manner. This includes preparing a professional letter of introduction before contacting a professional, developing questions in advance of an informational interview, and dressing professionally if interviewing in person.
- Anticipate interviewing the professional for no more than a half hour, unless the interview time is extended by the professional.
- If arranging an in-person informational interview with someone unknown to you, schedule the networking to take place in a commercially zoned office space or in a public place during regular business hours. Informational interviews should never take place at a private home, a home/office arrangement, or a hotel room.
- Sensitive or personal information received from or in conversation with a professional should not be shared with other BSU students or alumni or parties outside BSU.
- Always send a thank you letter after an on-line or in-person networking session.
- Never ask a professional, with whom you have networked, for an internship or a job. Networking should not be used for internship or job placement, recruitment, solicitation or personal means.



Networking Samples

Sample “Elevator Speech”

The “elevator speech” is a brief introduction to a professional when you only have a few minutes with them. This message can be used at job fairs, during introductory phone calls to new contacts, and at professional events including BSU’s Job Fair. Your “elevator speech” should provide your name, your background as it may interest the person with whom you are speaking and your reason for speaking to them.

“Hi, my name is Steven Jones. I am a junior at Bridgewater State University, majoring in History. I recently completed an internship at Houghton Mifflin and am interested in learning more about the field of publishing.”

“Hello, I am Megan Little. I am graduating this May from Bridgewater State University and am planning on building a career in social work. I would like to learn about your organization’s programs for the homeless.”

Sample Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

The following is a sample of an letter that can be sent to request an informational interview with a BSU Alumni Mentor.

35 Cider Road
Taunton, MA 02373

March 27, 2010

Mr. Benjamin Stevenson
Sales Manager
AT&T
200 Silk St.
Burlington, MA 02384

Dear Mr. Stevenson:

I found your contact information on Bridgewater State University’s Alumni Mentor database and I am interested in speaking to you about the field of sales and marketing.

I am currently a sophomore at Bridgewater State University and am working toward a degree in management with a concentration in marketing. Through my coursework and my part-time job in the business world, I have become interested in sales and may pursue this work after graduation.

I would appreciate the opportunity to ask you a few questions about your work and the field in general. Is there a day and time that you would be available to speak to me for a 20-25 minutes? I can be reached via e-mail at jmuller@bridgew.edu or by calling 508-671-1325. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jason Muller ‘13

Sample Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

The following networking letter can be sent via e-mail or regular mail to request an informational interview with a professional.

34 Bane Street
Brockton, MA 02364

February 23, 2012

Ms. Susan Janice
Corporate Controller
Concourse International Inc.
555 Billingsgate Street
Boston, MA 02366

Dear Ms. Janice:

Dr. Barry Bartam, a professor at Bridgewater State University, recommended that I contact you about my interest in entering the field of accounting.

I am currently a senior at Bridgewater State University graduating in May 2010 with a degree in finance with a concentration in accounting. My recent internship with State Street Corporation was very successful and I have concluded that I will definitely be pursuing work in this field. I would be interested in learning how you entered the field, what recommendations you may have for my job hunt and any suggestions for future experiences in the field.

I would like an opportunity to speak with you for 20-25 minutes. I will contact you next week to arrange an informational interview. If you would like to reach me before then, you can e-mail me at s6smith@bridgew.edu or call me at 508-366-2977. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha Smith '14

Sample Phone Scripts

Phone scripts can be used to prepare for calling your contacts after they have received your letter requesting an informational interview or for "cold calling" a company to find a professional with whom to network.

"Hello Ms. Janice, my name is Samantha Smith. Dr. Bartam from Bridgewater State University had recommended that I contact you. I recently sent you a letter requesting an informational interview with you. Would you have some time available today or would you be able to schedule 20-25 minutes to speak with me in the near future?"

"Hello Mr. Stevens. I found your contact information on your company's website. My name is Samantha Smith and I am a senior at Bridgewater State University majoring in history. I have recently completed an internship at WGBH and now plan to pursue a job in broadcasting. Would it be possible to arrange a 20-25 minute informational interview with you?"

"Hi. My name is Samantha Smith and I am a first year student at Bridgewater State University. I am gathering information about careers in IT. Is there someone in your company whom you would recommend I contact for scheduling a 20-25 minute informational interview?"

Sample Informational Interview Questions

1. How did you get into this field?
2. What do you think is the best preparation for this career?
3. Describe your typical day.
4. What personal attributes do you think are essential to succeed in this career?
5. What part of your job is most challenging?
6. What do you enjoy most about your job?
7. Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
8. What changes do you see taking place in your industry in the next few years?
9. What are entry level positions in your field?
10. What experiences do you recommend I obtain before I enter the field?
11. Where can I find more information about this career?
12. Are there professional organizations that you recommend I explore?
13. I saw on the company website that a new program has been developed. Could you tell me a little about this program?
14. What would my earning potential be in this field?
15. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same career path?
16. What is the best educational preparation for this work?
17. What qualifications do you look for in a person entering this field?
18. Where can I find up-to-date information about this field?
19. How do you recommend I find jobs (or internships) in this field?
20. Can you recommend one or two other people to whom I may speak about this field?
 - May I use your name when I contact him (or her)?

Sample Thank You Letter

Always send a thank you letter to the professional within 48 hours of the informational interview. Below is a sample thank you letter.

34 Bane Street
Brockton, MA 02364

February 23, 2012

Ms. Susan Janice
Corporate Controller
Concourse International Inc.
555 Billingsgate Street
Boston, MA 02366

Dear Ms. Janice:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Thursday to discuss your work at Concourse International Inc. I was impressed by your knowledge of the industry and appreciated receiving a tour of your offices.

Your referral to Elizabeth Poole was very useful. I have arranged to meet her in two weeks and look forward to gaining additional knowledge of the field from her.

I will contact you in a few months to give you an update of my job search. Thank you again for your help and valuable insight.

Sincerely,

Samantha Smith