



BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
CAREER SERVICES
...student to professional



Networking 101

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Networking: Making Connections

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WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is making connections and sharing information. Professional networking can be defined as making contacts, building support groups and creating relationships with people with similar professional interests.

WHY SHOULD I NETWORK?

Networking is an important skill to learn and practice. Building and maintaining relationships with professionals is helpful when you are exploring and preparing for careers. Networking provides opportunities for you to learn industry-specific information, introduces you to others in your field of interest and may even expose you to internship opportunities and job offers.



THROUGH NETWORKING, YOU CAN:

- Build experience interacting with professionals
- Receive expert and field specific advice on your resume and interviewing
- Decide whether a career is the right fit for you
- Learn what skills and qualifications are needed to enter and compete in a field
- Receive valuable internship and job search advice from insiders
- Learn about internship or job opportunities, sometimes before they are posted
- Be offered an internship, job shadow, or a job interview at an organization
- Form a network of people who will enjoy mentoring you

WHERE AND WITH WHOM CAN I NETWORK?

The idea of networking might seem intimidating and overwhelming, but you've probably done it before. Because networking is simply connecting with people, it can happen anywhere and everywhere. Networking currently occurs in two important venues: In-person and on-line. This packet will explore both options.

PREPARING FOR NETWORKING

Build a Professional Presence

Before you network, it is important that you present yourself in a polished and professional manner. This will communicate that you are ready to work in a professional setting.

To present yourself professionally in-person or on-line, you should:

- **Develop or update your resume.** A networking contact may ask to review your resume or forward it to their organization. A Career Services staff member can review your resume before you distribute it.
- **Purchase or borrow a suit and business casual attire.** You will need to wear a suit or business casual for most in-person networking opportunities or informational interviews. See Career Services' *Dress for Success* packet for descriptions of professional and business casual attire.
- **Know the individual and the organization.** When meeting or corresponding on-line with a professional, do your homework. Go to the organization's website and explore the Careers page, learn about their products and/or projects, history and mission. Find the individual on LinkedIn to build an understanding of their current job and work history.
- **Review your online presence.** Make sure you look professional on-line as well. Use the highest privacy setting on *Facebook* and clear it of any photos that may be inappropriate. Make sure your *LinkedIn* profile displays your best work and academic experiences. Review your *Twitter* feed and other social media accounts to make sure you have a professional presence on-line.



PRACTICE NETWORKING ETIQUETTE

The following guidelines will prepare you for networking in-person, on-line and on the phone.

IN - PERSON

Always greet the professional with a firm handshake, introduce yourself (first and last name) and express interest in meeting him or her.

Show you are listening. Nod your head, smile and make eye contact.

Turn off your cellphone. Do not answer your phone or text when networking.

When the conversation is done, thank him or her for their time.

PHONE

Upgrade your voicemail message to a professional level. For example: "Hello, you have reached ____, I am unavailable at the moment, but if you leave your name, a message and number I will respond as soon as I can. Thank you."

Provide the professional with the phone number you will most likely be available to answer. Do not provide your landline number if you are rarely home.

Choose quiet environments for phone conversations.

ONLINE

Use a descriptive subject line such as "Marketing Assistant Application".

Use proper salutations: Mr., Ms., or Dr.

Do not use slang words, texting or IM language such as "cuz, btw, or 4". Write in complete sentences. Do not abbreviate.

Be concise and to the point.

Always thank the professional at the end of an email or LinkedIn correspondence.

Use spell-check and reread your message before sending.

Know to whom you're sending a "Forward" or "Reply All" email.

Create Your Elevator Speech

An Elevator Speech is essential for introducing yourself to professionals. This brief introduction usually runs about 30 seconds and should be interesting, memorable and succinct. It also needs to explain what makes you unique.

To prepare your Elevator Speech:

1. Respond to the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What have I done that relates to my career interests?
- What makes me different from everyone else out there?
- Where would I like to work and what do I hope to do in that job in the future?

2. Take your responses and build a paragraph.

Your speech could look like this:

I am a junior at Bridgewater State University, majoring in management. I am a shift leader at MacDonald's managing 6 people during my shift and working 30 hours a week while attending school full-time. In addition, this past fall, I interned in the customer service division at MEDITECH providing online support to healthcare clients and learning supervisory skills. I am interested in building a career as a manager in the software industry or in government.

This introduction can be used during networking both on-line and in-person. You can pitch your elevator speech when you are meeting someone at a barbecue but it can also be used for your LinkedIn summary or when you e-mail someone to request an informational interview.

NETWORKING ONLINE

You may already be familiar with connecting online through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. But are you utilizing all the capabilities of these virtual tools to network?

On-line networking has become a “must have” in today’s digital world. Not only is this type of networking important when you are exploring careers, and in the middle of a job search, but it is equally important in maintaining your relationships when you have a job and are building a career.

Building Your Online Brand

Currently, more than 92% of employers use social media to recruit candidates.* For this reason it is very important for you, particularly while searching for jobs and internships, to create a professional presence on your social media sites including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. The following tips will help you build a professional brand on-line.

- Maintain consistency across all social media profiles. Keep the content and style similar to present yourself as a true professional in all digital mediums.
- Make sure all your profile photos define you as an emerging professional. Choose a good photographer, dress professionally, choose a neutral background and take a headshot.
- Develop a compelling, professional summary similar to your Elevator Speech to highlight who you are, what you want to do and what makes you unique. Use this summary for all social media profiles.
- Follow and connect with professionals in your field of interest and participate in discussions. Respond in a professional manner and thank responders to your discussion threads.
- Be careful who you Like/Follow/Friend on social media. Unsubscribe yourself from inappropriate or unprofessional groups, feeds, etc.

*Social Recruiting Survey, Jobvite, 2015

The BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group on LinkedIn

One of the best ways to network with BSU alumni is to join the BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group on LinkedIn. This social media group is comprised of alumni who have joined the site specifically to provide assistance and advice to BSU students and other alumni.

You can use the site to post a discussion or contact individual alumni on the site to learn tips and strategies about networking, internships, job searching and other career related topics. These connections will help prepare you to achieve your career goals.

Joining the LinkedIn Group

- Go to <http://students.linkedin.com/> and create a profile that details your education, internship, volunteer and work experience for other professionals to see. Remember to add a professional looking headshot.
- Use <https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students> as a resource to help you finalize your profile as well as learn how you can use LinkedIn for networking and job searches.
- Once your profile is complete, search for the **BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group** in the search box and request to be a member.

Starting a Discussion

The BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group is a great place to ask questions about your career. Sample questions to ask include:

- I am a psychology major. What have you done with this major?
- I am a junior accounting major. Anyone have recommendations for finding an internship for this summer? (Please note: Never ask alumni to give you an internship or job, ask them how to find internships or jobs.)
- Does anyone have any suggestions for great aviation management internships in this field in Massachusetts?
- What tips do you have for networking in the social work field?
- What type of experiences should I participate in while at BSU before I become an elementary school teacher?
- I am preparing to interview for jobs. Does anyone have tips for interview preparation? What questions have you been asked during interviews?



The following is a sample of a discussion thread on LinkedIn:

Ann Smith, BSU Student

Currently I am a junior and pursuing a degree in management at BSU. I have developed an interest in the area of human resources. I would be interested in hearing from alumni in this field regarding their experiences, what type of entry level jobs are available in the field and how to find internships. Please feel free to add your comments to this discussion or email me privately at BSUStudent@student.bridgew.edu. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Stephen Wimmons, HR Manager at Waldo Inc.

I would be happy to provide you with information regarding my line of work. Feel free to send me message through LinkedIn.

Ann Smith, BSU Student

Thank you, Mr. Wimmons. I just sent you a message and look forward to our conversation.



MESSAGING AN INDIVIDUAL

You can directly message up to 15 members of any LinkedIn group, including the BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group, each month for free, 30 days after joining LinkedIn. Explore the Networking Group or search for your alumni contacts by location, major, etc, at www.linkedin.com/school/19257/alumni/. See below for a sample of a message sent to an alumni mentor:

Dear Mr. Stevenson:

I recently saw your profile on BSU's Student and Alumni Networking Group on LinkedIn 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 at Home Depot, I have become interested in retail 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 about 20-25 minutes? I can be reached via messaging me in LinkedIn, via e-mail astudent@bridgew.edu or by calling 508-555-5555. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Simon Hazzle '16



<https://www.linkedin.com/>

LinkedIn

OTHER WAYS TO USE LINKEDIN FOR NETWORKING

The BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group is a great way to introduce yourself to LinkedIn. But there are many other ways to expand your network, find jobs and internships and connect with professionals on LinkedIn. They include:

- Join industry-specific groups. Search for and join groups for industries that interest you, participate in Discussions as well as Message members to request informational interviews.
- Join the LinkedIn group for your high school, volunteer groups and other community based groups you belong to and expand your connections beyond BSU.
- Use the My Network tab on your main profile page to increase your connections.
- Use Bridgewater State University's page (www.linkedin.com/school/19257/alumni/) to explore what careers alumni have chosen, where they work and what alumni, with your major, have accomplished.
- Search for and follow companies to view posted jobs or current news. Search within a company to see if BSU alumni work there and reach out to them to request an informational interview.
- Search for jobs both on your main profile page through the Jobs tab, through LinkedIn groups you have joined or through the student jobs portal: www.linkedin.com/studentjobs.
- Search for internships and jobs through the Jobs tab.

For more information on the BSU Student and Alumni Networking Group as well as using LinkedIn, go to my.bridgew.edu/departments/CareerServices, click on the SiteMap and open up the BSU Student and Alumni Networking link.

OTHER ONLINE NETWORKING OPTIONS

TWITTER

Twitter has become an invaluable tool for those looking to brand themselves professionally, connect with employers, and network for potential job leads. Below are several ways you can strategically use Twitter to advance your career in real time.

TWITTER PROFILE

- Use your real name and keep your Twitter handle professional or career relevant.
- Craft your 140 character Twitter profile including who you are, what you do, and things you enjoy. Include a link to other sites, blogs and pages about you.
- Use a professional headshot photo.

STRATEGIC TWEETS

- Share information and resources that employers might find useful.
- Keep tweets professional and geared toward your audience.
- Build a positive reputation in your industry by tweeting the latest news, articles or research related to your field.
- Use job-search-related hashtags: #job, #jobsearch, #internships, #career, #employment, #hire, etc.
- Use Twitter apps to keep up with hiring trends. Follow career and industry experts and learn about jobs at sites including TwitJobSearch and TweetMyJobs.

MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

- Follow potential employers for up-to-the minute job leads and news.
- Follow leaders in your industry and take advantage of real time connections on industry specific topics.
- Follow Career Services (@BSUCareerServ), the BSU Alumni Office (@BSU_Alumni) and career coaches for career advice.
- Participate in job chats such as #jobhuntchat or #careerchat.

SAMPLE TWEETS

- *Excited for the crisis response training today at my #internship. Important skill for future #counselors! #socialwork*
- *Great lecture on social media #marketing strategies in my Corporate Communications class today.*
- *@StateStreet, I'm excited to stop by your table at @BSUCareerServ's Job Fair tomorrow!*
- *Great time tutoring pre-schoolers today with @JumpstartBSU. #educationfirst*

[illegible]

Revisit your profile and ensure that it is professional.

- _____

- Manually approve posts and photos you are tagged in.

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NETWORKING IN-PERSON

As mentioned before, in-person networking can take place anywhere and everywhere. In addition to networking at your part-time or summer job, during an internship, with family members, and in social environments, you can connect with people at BSU including faculty and staff, classmates and student organizations and clubs. Connections can be built when you least expect it, so 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 lifelong professional contacts at BSU's Career Fairs.

How to network in-person

Having a networking conversation with someone does not have to be complicated. The most important rule in making professional connections is to have a genuine interest in the person. When you meet someone:

1. Start the conversation by asking him or her what they do for a living.
2. Listen carefully and attentively.
3. If he or she asks you what you do, respond by using your Elevator Speech.
4. As the conversation ends and you would like to know more about their line of work, tell them that you are in the process of exploring their line of work and ask if you can do a brief informational interview with them either in person or on the phone.
5. If they agree, ask for a business card or write down their contact information.
6. Follow up with an e-mail or letter requesting an informational interview.



CONDUCTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Once you have made initial contact with a professional, you can request an informational interview. An informational interview is a series of questions that you ask to gain first-hand knowledge about a field and learn about internship and job prospects. This conversation will be one of your most effective ways to build connections to and market yourself as a future professional in their field.

The following steps will lead you up to and through an informational interview:

1. The Introduction

Prepare and send a letter or e-mail requesting an informational interview. 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.

2. The Informational Interview

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

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, arrive ten minutes early 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.



Sample Informational Interview Questions

Always begin an Informational Interview with questions that highlight your interest in the professional's work, career and organization. Your final questions can be more focused on you and your career path.

1. How did you get into this field?
2. Describe your typical day.
3. What part of your job is most challenging? What do you enjoy most about your job?
4. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same career path?
5. I saw on your organization's website that a new program has been developed. Could you tell me a little about this program?
6. What changes do you see taking place in your industry in the next few years?
7. Where can I find more information about this career?
8. Are there professional organizations that you recommend I explore?
9. What do you think is the best academic and out of classroom preparation for this career?
10. What are entry level positions in this field?
11. What qualifications do you look for in a person entering this field?
12. Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
13. How do you recommend I find jobs (or internships) in this field?
14. 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 Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

The following 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, 2018

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

Dear Ms. Janice:

As you may recall, we recently met at the Careers in Accounting Panel at Bridgewater State University.

As I mentioned the other day, I am currently a junior at Bridgewater State University pursuing 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

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. We met a few weeks ago at the Careers in Account Panel at BSU. 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?”

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER AFTER AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

A thank you letter should be sent via e-mail or regular mail within 48 hours after an informational interview.

34 Bane Street
Brockton, MA 02364
February 23, 2018

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. 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



Network In-person at BSU

You can also network on the BSU campus. In addition to learning about careers from faculty, staff and your fellow students, the following programs will provide you with easy access to alumni and other professionals who want to network with you.

Career Fairs

Introduce yourself to 60+ employers at Career Services' three Career Fairs. Use your elevator speech at the Internship and Job Fair in the fall and/or the Education Fair and the Job and Internship Fair in the spring to meet recruiters and learn about upcoming internships and jobs.

Internships

Participating in an internship is a great way to network with professionals. The Hire BSU jobs and internships database lists 300+ internships and the Internship Office offers funding for many student experiences.

The Job Shadow Program During Winter Break

Spend one day during Winter Break with a professional exploring a career of your choice and building connections. This option is available to all full-time, undergraduates with a 2.5 GPA.

Career Panels

Several times a year, Career Services brings BSU alumni and other professionals to campus to discuss their careers with students. You can ask a question from the audience and/or connect with specific individuals after the program.

Networking Mocktail Party

This program provides an opportunity to build essential networking skills while mingling with alumni and other professionals in a mocktail party setting.

BSU Etiquette Dinner

This program, held twice a year, offers lessons in professional etiquette while dining on a four course meal. Alumni and other professionals also provide opportunities to network during this program.

To learn about these campus-based networking opportunities and more, go to mybridgew.edu/careerservices.

SUSTAINING CONTACT WITH CONNECTIONS

Keeping Track of Connections

Some of the professionals with whom you network may be interested in helping you find internships, jobs and provide other support well after your first interaction. Because of this, it is very important to build one or more tracking systems. They may include:

- Using LinkedIn to connect with professionals whom you have met and with whom you wish to maintain contact.
- Track connections on an Excel spreadsheet or on paper and include a comment section to recall conversations, referrals and recommendations.
- Download an app that scans business cards to your smart phone and tracks connections on-line.

Maintaining Connections

While it is always important to be making new connections and expanding your network in your field, you should also keep in touch with existing connections. Networking is a lifelong skill and you never know when you may need more advice or support or when they may need or want your knowledge and assistance. A good networker does their best to reconnect with individuals in their network every 6-12 months. Great approaches for keeping in touch with your network include:

- Choosing to have daily or weekly updates from LinkedIn e-mailed to you to provide you notices of job and career changes, job anniversaries and birthdays.
- Contacting your connections to thank them after interacting with professionals whom they recommended.
- E-mailing an article you found on-line that you feel would interest them.
- Meeting for coffee or lunch to catch up.
- Sending an e-mail update of your career progress at the start of every new year and asking for updates from them.

If you would like more information about or assistance with networking, you can schedule a Networking Appointment with Career Services by calling 508-531-1328.

