

NETWORKING AFTER 5



Networking: Common concerns for students

TIP: It will help to consider networking as an opportunity to find out how YOU CAN HELP OTHERS, rather than what they can do for you.

I'm really nervous about introducing myself

- If you are nervous and have not had much experience at networking events, challenge yourself. **Set yourself a goal** of introducing yourself and having a conversation with *3 people* over the course of the evening. Start with another student you don't already know to gain confidence.
- Try to relax and introduce yourself as you would at a social gathering. "Hi, My name is John, How are you finding tonight?" "Hi, my name is Sandra, have you been on campus before?" "Hello, what a great night, did you come Last year? My name is Matt"
- Remember that all business people were once young and inexperienced. They remember clearly how nerve-wracking their first networking experiences were!

I don't like the idea of asking other people for a job.

- ***The point of networking is to build mutually beneficial partnerships.***
- **Never ask for a job**, most people don't have the power to give you a job anyway. Ask for information (because that's free!).
- As a result of your networking, you may gain some great ideas or leads about organisations that are hiring, consider these a bonus but not the entire aim of your networking ventures

I feel uncomfortable with the idea of networking, it feels like using people.

- ***Go to networking events with the mindset that you want to find ways to help others and be involved.*** Networking is about building professional relationships with people that may have short and Long term benefit to both parties
- Networking is reciprocal, you may not realise it at the time but the other person may learn as much from you as you do from them
- Do some preparation first- *prepare some conversation starters*
- Build rapport by
 - encouraging the other person to talk about themselves-their background, how they got into their current role, their observations of the industry they work in; OR

- *Talk about neutral topics, such as sport, theatre, books movies etc. e.g. I recently read.....have you heard of it? Or I'm looking for a good book to read, can you recommend something?*
- Be prepared to talk about yourself **if they ask**-prepare a very short (one sentence) *summary, make it interesting and don't use jargon! Use a 'hook' or something which will leave them asking more.*

I don't know why experienced people would want to talk to me.

- Organisations are always seeking potential candidates who are bright, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Employers are interested in students and graduates with very good communication and problem solving skills. The way you conduct your networking is an indicator of these skills.
- Experienced people in industry are also interested in the views of students and graduates as you've more recently studied and been exposed to new ideas and theories. You are also more aware of how young people think and most organisations are keen to engage with potential staff and customers who may fit your demographic.
- Most people remember what it was like to start in their field and are happy to support new graduates with some guidance; they often express the opinion that they wished they had someone to talk to when they were in your situation.

I'm from another culture/country. What is culturally acceptable in a networking situation in Australia?

It's difficult to be definitive about this. However, it is true that certain behaviours or expectations in one culture or country may be very different in another. Try not to make many assumptions about what you are used to back home will work well here. Learn by observation and seek out a mentor who can guide you through some networking situations and give you feedback.

Some of the areas of social contact that can be quite different include:

- Handshaking
- Appropriateness of clothing and personal hygiene
- Level of eye contact
- Tone of voice
- Physical space between people
- Breaking into a conversation or moving away from a conversation
- Levels of formality and informality and use of humour
- Amount of time spent building rapport
- Giving and receiving business cards
- Protocols about mentioning other people and their information
- Attitudes to authority, hierarchy, bureaucracy and self promotion
- Attitudes to asking questions or clarifying information
- The importance placed on which school and university attended
- The importance placed on family, region, religion

Adapted from University of Sydney

http://sydney.edu.au/careers/finding_jobs/job_search_strategies/networking_tips.shtml