Networking Quick Tips

Networking Essentials:
- Networking is intentionally making connections with people.
- It can be as formal as a meeting in an office, or as casual as a meeting for coffee.
- Networking, informational interviews, and job interviews are all tied together.

Career Buffs:
Career Buffs is the online resource for CU Boulder students and the connection to all things career. Use the employer directory to find employers who recruit students. Login to Career Buffs.

Faculty and Staff:
There are more than 7,500 faculty and staff on campus you can network with. Start with those you already know. Go to office hours and introduce yourself. You will be surprised how much faculty and staff can help you network!

Alumni:
There are more than 270,000 CU Boulder Alumni. What are the odds that someone works in an industry you’re interested in? The CU Alumni Association has a variety of CU Alumni groups including a group on LinkedIn. You can even use the LinkedIn.com/Alumni tool to find alumni in your area of interest.

Professional Associations:
These are groups of like-minded professionals in one field or industry. Professional associations are great for industry information, networking, and job postings. Weddles.com/Associations is a great place to start!

Social Media:
LinkedIn is one of the most effective resources to help you get started networking and finding connections. Start by creating a professional profile. Make contacts with people you already know. Join groups you’re interested in. Look for Career Services Groups or Professional Groups. Be social and join in on conversations. Learn more about how to leverage social media at Colorado.edu/career.

Student Groups, Organizations, & Departments:
Join CU Student Organizations. Look for groups of students with similar interests. Find centers on campus to connect with a wide variety of groups.
Once you’ve identified people to speak with it’s time to meet them!

We often call these informational interviews. Most people like to talk about themselves and their careers and are eager to help new professionals, especially if they have something in common. When you can identify how you know someone (through schools, program of study, or common organizations), they are more likely to agree to speak with you.

4 Steps for an Informational Interview:

1. Be clear in all of your correspondence that you are not looking for a job. Instead of asking for an “informational interview,” explain that you want to gather information regarding the company and industry to help with your future career path.
2. Call or e-mail to set up an appointment. Tell them you are researching the ________ field/company, and asking for advice or information, not a job. Have your list of questions prepared in case the interviewee says they have time right now.
3. Ask for a 20-30 minute meeting at their convenience, at their worksite, and assure them you know they are busy and you will be brief.
4. Be professional. Dress appropriately, come prepared with questions, and take notes.

Prepare for the Informational Interview:

- Read everything you can about the interviewee, company, and industry. If you cannot find a great deal of information, call the company and ask for printed materials or online resources.
- If you have identified the field as an area of interest, know how your skills, interests, and experiences are a good match for the field. Be ready to articulate this in case the interviewee asks!
- Have a list of prepared questions and bring a notebook to the interview. Ask open-ended questions (usually start with “what” or “how”).

Follow up:

- Immediately send either a hand-written or e-mailed thank you note.
- Record important information you received, including any referrals, reading suggestions, advice, etc.
- When you contact the referrals, you may want to let the original interviewee know and take that opportunity to again demonstrate your appreciation for his or her time.
- Find creative ways to maintain the new connection. When you read an article or hear an interesting tidbit you think may be of interest, forward the information on to the professional.
- Evaluate your experience:
  - What did you learn?
  - What do you like/dislike about the job, company, and industry?
  - How did you do conducting the interview?
  - How well did you prepare?
  - Did you get the information you wanted?
  - What else do you still want to know?
  - What can you do differently for the next interview?
  - Who else could you interview to gain additional information?
Networking Questions to Ask

To get acquainted and to learn about background:
- How did you get started in this field?
- How well did your educational training prepare you?
- If you were starting out again, what would you do differently?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What qualifications/key skills are needed to do this job well?
- What training/education/volunteer experience is helpful?
- What are the career paths for this type of work?
- What interests you most about your job?
- If you were not in this career, what would you be doing?

To Learn about the work environment:
- What is a typical workday like? A typical week?
- How did you view this career before you got into it?
- What do you perceive as the major rewards and challenges to this field?
- What special problems might someone new to this career have in adjusting to it?
- Can you explain you company culture?
- How do your family and friend fit into the lifestyle your career creates?

Advice and next steps:
- What is the best advice you can give a person interested in this occupation?
- What professional organizations do you suggest?
- What reading do you suggest?
- Where else could I find people who do this type of work? Who else do you recommend I talk to?

To learn about entering the field:
- What are the most important factors used to hire people in this work (education, experience, skills)?
- How do people find out about positions in your company?
- Where are they advertised?
- What type of training programs/management programs does the organization offer?
- What is the entry-level salary range for this industry?

To learn about work stability and advancement:
- How can people advance in this field and how far?
- How much security do you feel in this organization? In this field?
- What trends, changes, or issues do you see shaping the direction of this field in five to ten years?
- What is the promotion process?
- Is an advanced degree helpful for promotion?

Frequently Asked Questions-

– Isn’t networking just using people?
No. Networking is the art of building new relationships. Usually it makes people feel good to be able to give information and help others, so you may actually be doing them a favor by asking!

– Can I just use the internet? I don’t feel comfortable talking with people I don’t know.
Networking takes practice and many people feel uncomfortable the first time. Start with people you know and trust. Write out a list of questions beforehand and have them prepared. Remember people like talking about themselves.

– If the person can’t hire me, isn’t this just wasting my time?
No, networking is not about asking for a job. Networking is about gathering information! If an employment opportunity develops, you will be prepared with information about the profession, industry, or company.

– Should I take my resume?
It depends on the event you are attending. If the attendees know this is an event to meet potential candidates, then yes. If this is a networking event or an informational interview, then do not bring your resume.