



EMORY

ROLLINS  
SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC  
HEALTH

# NETWORKING GUIDE

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## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions. The purpose of networking is to connect with others based on shared interests in order to develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships, which often involve the sharing of information and contacts.

### WHY IS NETWORKING NECESSARY?

Research shows that 60-90% of jobs are found through making the right contacts! It is a great way to discover unadvertised positions and to get the most current information.

If you are serious about finding the best position for your next career move in a timely manner, you must network. The goal is to move into the hidden, unadvertised job market, using every available resource that contact with other people will provide you.

Current employees are among the best sources of referrals. Many firms report that 40-50% of their openings are filled by candidates referred to by staff members. Moreover, companies view such candidates more favorably than those brought in through other methods because they already know something about the organization and have a personal connection with it.

Networking is crucial to your future career as a public health professional. It is simply not sufficient to simply only attend your classes if you wish to maximize your success. We recognize that this may come as unexpected to you. This guide should provide you with basic information about networking and to increase your comfort level with the idea of networking, which is foreign to many.

Be sure to attend our Networking 101 Workshop and networking events in the fall to learn more and to put your skills to practice in a non-threatening environment.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that **63.4%** of all workers use informal job finding methods through contacts such as family, friends, neighbors, and former co-workers and professionals.

Mark S. Granovetter, a Harvard sociologist, reported to Forbes magazine that "informal contacts" account for almost **75%** of all successful job searches.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that **94%** of successful job hunters claimed that networking had made all the difference.

### WHEN & WHERE TO NETWORK

Networking is an art that we, as professionals, continually construct and practice in our everyday life. It never ends. Do not wait for a networking event to start developing relationships. Anyone you meet is a potential networking contact. Also, do not wait until you are looking for a job to begin networking. It takes time to build relationships, and it cannot be done under pressure. In addition, others will be more receptive to you if you are genuinely getting to know them, rather than simply fishing for jobs.

Networking can occur virtually anywhere – elevators, social events, professional associations and conferences, among peers, in restrooms, in grocery lines, etc. You can network in your classes, your work environment, through professional and student organizations, as well as relatives and friends.

## OVERCOMING YOUR CONCERNS

If you are one of the 25% of people who are introverts and the thought of striking up a conversation with a complete stranger scares you, fear not. You do not have to change your personality to be successful.

*Try these tips:*

### Discard incorrect notions

Many of you may feel that networking is like asking for a handout. You are not asking strangers for a job! When you network, you are using shared interests to seek out information and develop mutually beneficial relationships with others. Do not assume you are being a pest - most people can and will provide useful information and are glad to do so if asked in the right way.

### Become a good listener

You do not need to talk the entire time. Listening is just as important in building a relationship. Take the time to listen to the other person, demonstrating your interest in what they do. Absorb and reflect upon what you hear. This will help when it comes time to follow-up with the person, as well.

### Project a confident and professional demeanor

Dress appropriately and know your stuff, and you will automatically feel more confident. You can also use good body language, such as making eye contact, to appear interested and connected.

### Prepare and practice your “elevator speech”

Write a summary of what you want people to know about you that can be delivered in less than 20 seconds. Make it upbeat and succinct: who you are, what you do, what you are looking for. Then practice your elevator speech in front of a mirror and with friends. See the next section for more information on preparing your own elevator speech.

Practice your dialogue, prepare things to talk about (other than the weather), have a list of standard questions, and do your research! Learn what you need to know to sound bright and confident.

### Do not try to do all of your networking at once or in an emergency

Start by taking baby steps. Networking should be incorporated into your life, so that you do not feel like you must go on a frenzy when you are searching for a job. At that time, the contacts you have already made may come in handy. The key is to build relationships before you need them.

## CRAFT AN EFFECTIVE ELEVATOR SPEECH

Imagine that you board an elevator and find that you are riding up to the 8<sup>th</sup> floor with the Director of the CDC. What would you say in that short amount of time to introduce yourself while grabbing their attention in an effective manner? This is how the phrase “elevator speech” was coined.

Having an elevator speech is a key part of your preparation for networking. You will be able to use your elevator speech to break the ice in any social situation with other public health professionals, be it an elevator ride or conference reception, and the more you use it, the more comfortable you will become. Using the speech will ease your fear of networking by taking away the guesswork of how to begin a conversation.

### Sample Elevator Speech

*My name is Any Student. I am a medical entomologist with over 10 years of experience managing, monitoring, and evaluation nationwide programs in Africa to prevent neglected diseases such as Trachoma and Onchocerciasis. I am currently obtaining my MPH in Global Health at Emory’s Rollins School of Public Health so that I may gain further skills in public health methods. Once I finish, I plan to pursue a career in which I can continue my contributions to alleviate the burden of infectious diseases on affected populations in Sub Saharan Africa.*



## NETWORKING LOGISTICS

### RSVP

Registering to an event is the first way you can indicate your professionalism.

### Attire

Dress professionally. You only get one chance to make a first impression. When in doubt, dress a bit nicer than you think you need to.

### Name Tags

Wear your nametag on the right side, providing an easy line of sight when shaking hands.

### Handshakes

When meeting someone for the first time, extend your hand and make sure your handshake is firm but not too strong. Keep your drink in your left hand, so that your right hand stays dry.

### Business Cards

Do not ask for a card from everyone you meet, but do not offer a business card until asked. When receiving it, do not immediately shove it away. Treat it with respect by taking a moment to look at it, and even repeat the name aloud or refer to something on the card. It is fine to take notes about your conversation on the back of the card to refresh your memory later, but wait until after the discussion is over.

### Food

Do not arrive hungry. You should not be stuffing your face the entire time, as your time for networking is limited. When eating, step aside to a corner or seat and then return to networking afterward. Try striking up conversation at the buffet table! It is an easy and relaxed way of starting a discussion.

### Alcohol

Do not overindulge on alcoholic beverages. Know your limits. You want to make sure you present yourself in the best light possible.

### Questions to Ask

It is important to have some standard questions in mind when networking. These can be applied to most situations. However, in social situations where you are introducing yourself to multiple persons, be careful not to use the same line of questions within earshot of each host. Ask open-ended questions that will stimulate a brief conversation. See sample questions below.

### Ending the Conversation

Do not stay too long in one place. After eight to ten minutes, excuse yourself with a pleasantry such as, "It was nice meeting you..." Do not be afraid to speak to several different people. You never know who will have information or contacts of interest to you.

### *Sample Questions to Ask*

- ▶ How would you describe the work environment/corporate culture?
- ▶ What kind of experiences, paid or unpaid, would you encourage people to have when pursuing a career in your field?
- ▶ What educational preparation do you recommend?
- ▶ What types of strategies are important for success in your field?
- ▶ What is the most effective job search method in your industry?
- ▶ What are typical entry-level job types, titles and functions?
- ▶ What skills/characteristics do you think contribute to success in this field?
- ▶ What helped or led you to get into this line of work?
- ▶ Do you know of anyone who is also interested in \_\_\_\_? Would it be all right for me to contact this person?

## NEXT STEPS

Once the event is over, your networking does not stop! Be sure to follow up with those you have met, keep in contact, share information and offer to help in any way you can.

- ▶ Stay organized. Set up a file containing information on those you have contacted, how and when you contacted them as well as the outcome of the contact.
- ▶ Follow up with a written acknowledgement or "Thank You" note to your networking contacts. An email is good, but a handwritten card is better.
- ▶ Remain in contact with people whom you have met by contacting them periodically. Keep your contacts abreast of how your meeting went with whom they referred you to.
- ▶ It is appropriate to request to set up a professional post-networking meeting, in which you can continue your conversation with your contact. Be sure to send a thank you note at the conclusion of this meeting, expressing your appreciation for their time.
- ▶ Continue to augment your contact list, even after you have graduated or moved on to a different area. We never reach a point in our professional or personal lives where we stop networking.

## PARTING THOUGHTS

- ▶ Think of networking as a way of life. Networking is a social skill to be practiced on a daily basis.
- ▶ You can network in your classes, your work environment, through professional and student organizations, relatives and friends, – virtually anywhere!
- ▶ Maximize your first impression by submitting an RSVP, dressing appropriately and arriving early.
- ▶ Develop a brief introduction (5-10 seconds) that identifies who you are and clarifies your career goals. This is your “elevator speech”.
- ▶ Present yourself to your contact as a referral source and not simply as a student who needs a job or a reference. Even after a contact may have helped you to achieve your academic or career goals, your personal resources can help to benefit someone else.
- ▶ Networking sessions are not the time to hand out copies of your resume or to “fish” for a job. Rather, you should build informal relationships that can be maintained over a long period.
- ▶ Feel free to partake in any food or drinks during a networking event. However, do not overindulge in alcoholic beverages. Such behavior is simply inappropriate. Know and stick to your limits.
- ▶ Ask open-ended questions, such as “How did you enter into your profession?” that will stimulate a brief conversation.
- ▶ Request a business card or contact information from each individual with whom you meet. Take a moment to examine their card, repeat their name aloud. Treat the card with respect and do not take notes on it in front of its owner.