

Building a Professional Community through Networking

What is networking?

Connecting with people in your field of interest or a related field of interest, to assist you in learning about, and landing career and job opportunities.

Why should I network?

It will assist you in clearly defining your job and career interests, and help you uncover the “hidden job market” that will lead to more and better job opportunities. If you do not network you are limiting your job prospects to about 20% of what is actually available to you. No kidding.

Where do I find contacts?

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Professional societies | Classrooms | Thesis advisor/committee members |
| University career offices | Alumni associations | Previous jobs (other students/post-docs/bosses) |
| Social Networks | Clubs and student groups | |
| Undergrad professors | Visiting faculty | |
| Industry directories | | |

How do I make contact?

- Phone calls or emails – Contacting someone you were referred to (emails are best these days)
- “Cold” calling – Contacting someone you don’t know to begin establishing a professional relationship
- Direct contact – Walking up to a professional and beginning a conversation at a job fair, social occasion, seminar visit, conference, etc.
- Chance meeting – Striking up a conversation with someone in a social or informal setting; Michigan events, graduate student recruiting weekends
- Social Networking via LinkedIn or other

How do I prepare myself?

1. Determine what you want to know. Are you networking for career exploration or to identify an actual job prospect, or both?
2. Career exploration: Develop a list of questions for career exploration or “informational interviewing.” (See attached handout.)
3. Determine how you want to introduce yourself.
4. Determine how you want to describe your background in the conversation.
5. Determine what might be next steps after the conversation.

After the contact, what do I do?

Begin a contact information sheet organized in a contact binder or folder:

- Record key points of the conversation—What did you learn, what were the answers to your questions?
- Write down any additional lead provided to you by the contact--such as new ideas you learned and additional people he or she suggested you contact.
- Write down your next steps following this contact. e.g., Do you plan to follow-up again? If so, when? Do you need to send materials to this contact—a resume or sample of your work? etc.
- Send a thank you note. This can be done over email but it is important that you acknowledge the person having spent time with you and to follow up.

Navigating a Challenging Academic Job Market

Paula D. Wishart, Rackham Graduate School

Lynne Sebille-White, The Career Center

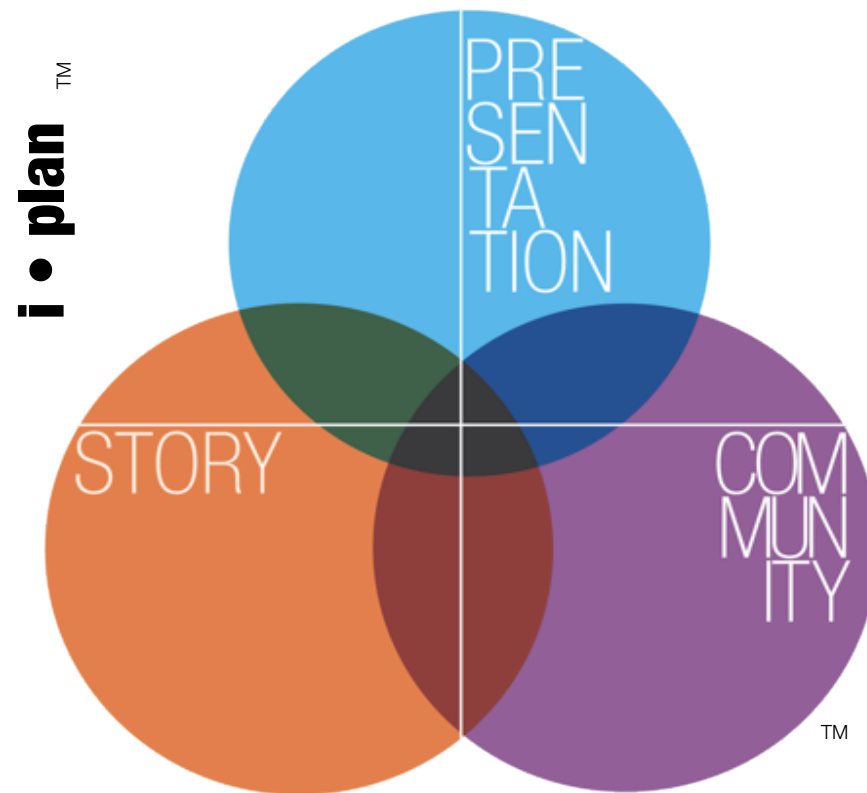


You may be wondering...

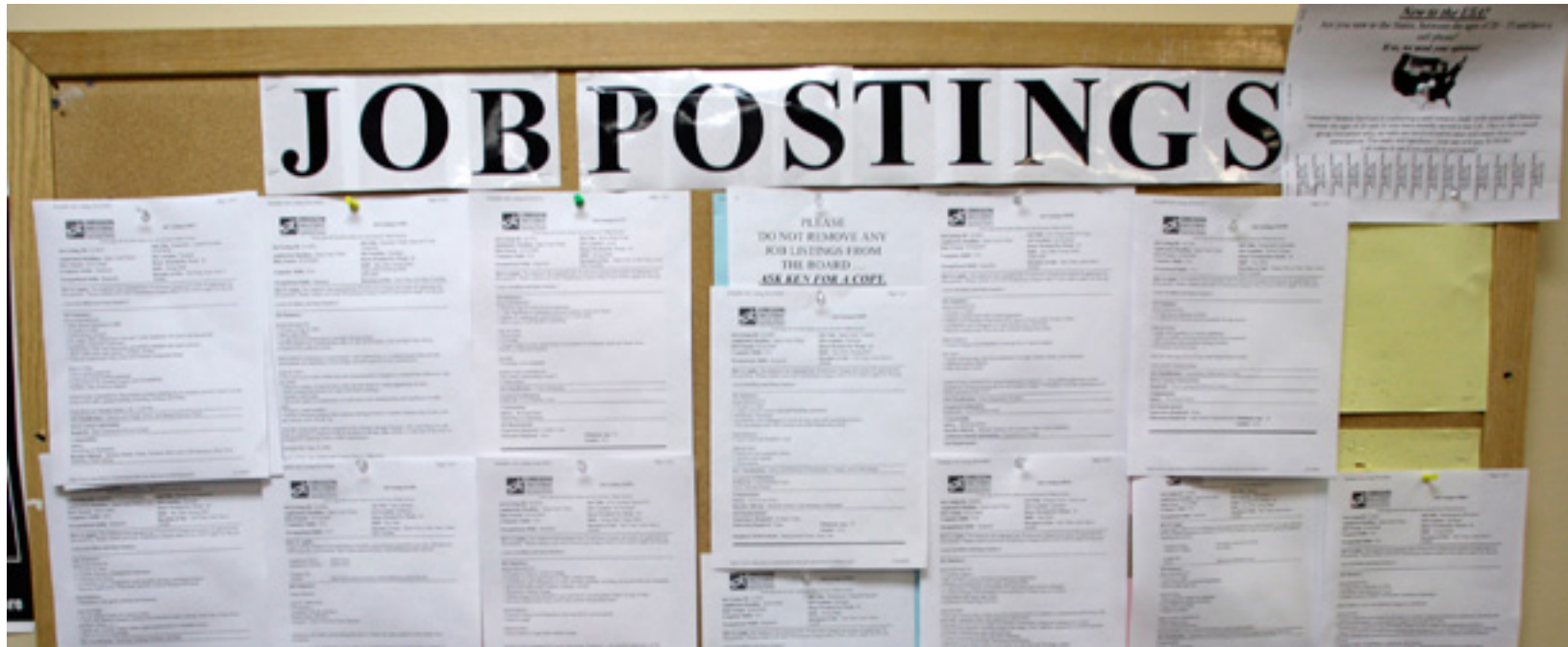
***When should I
start my Job
search?***



Not when, but how...



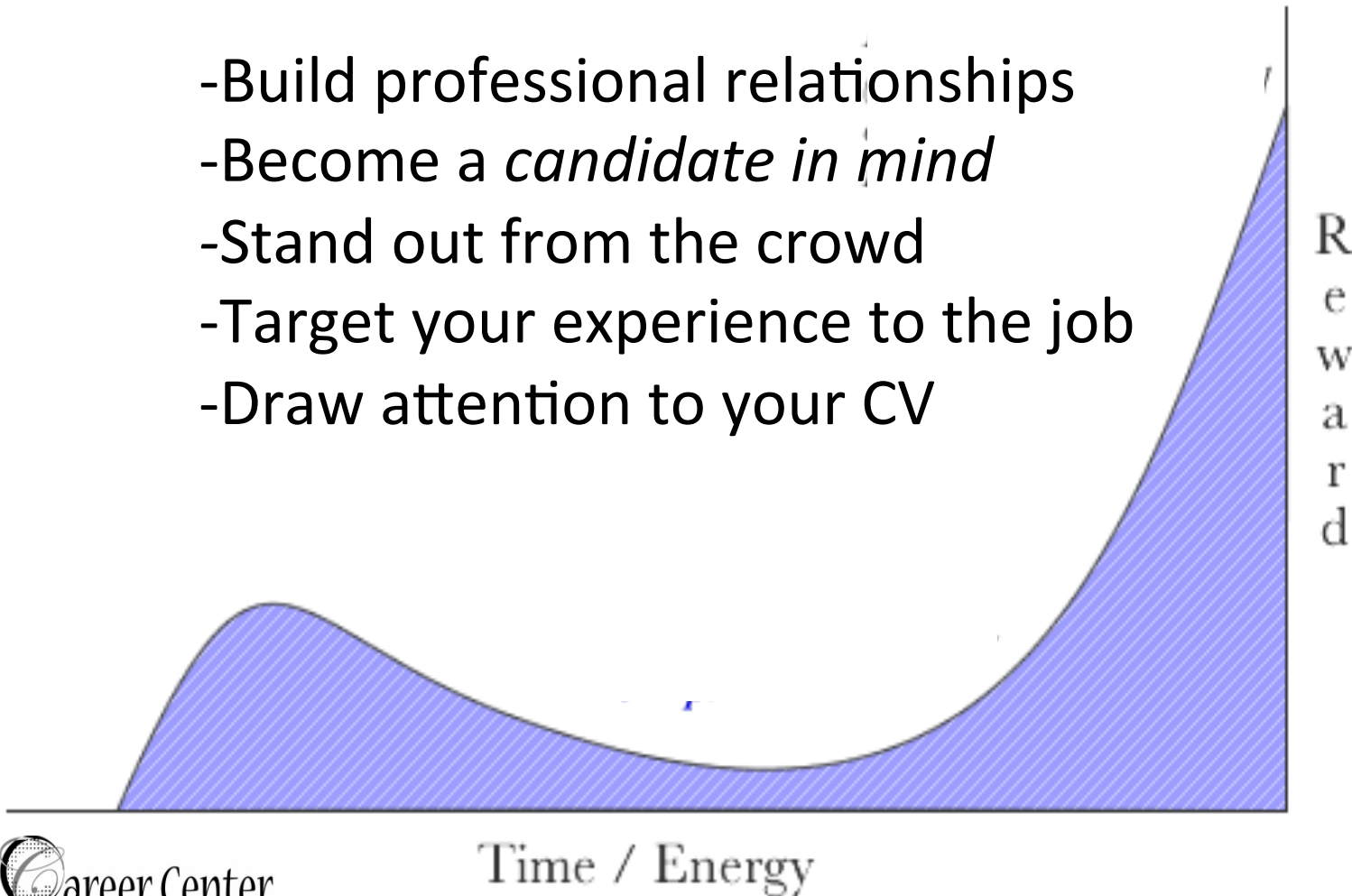
Typical Approach



(Hint: Don't rely on this to get you a job!)

To navigate this market you need to get a head of the “posting curve”

- Build professional relationships
- Become a *candidate in mind*
- Stand out from the crowd
- Target your experience to the job
- Draw attention to your CV



How Do You Stand Out?

- Be in the KNOW:
 - Know your story - skills, goals, research
 - Know the job are you seeking
 - Know the institution/department
- Connect your materials to the job



Building Professional Communities

- Personal network:
advisor, faculty, peers
- Professional associations
- Social networking:
e.g., LinkedIn, BioCrowd
- Direct inquiry



Building Relationships: *Initiating the Conversation*

Face-to-face

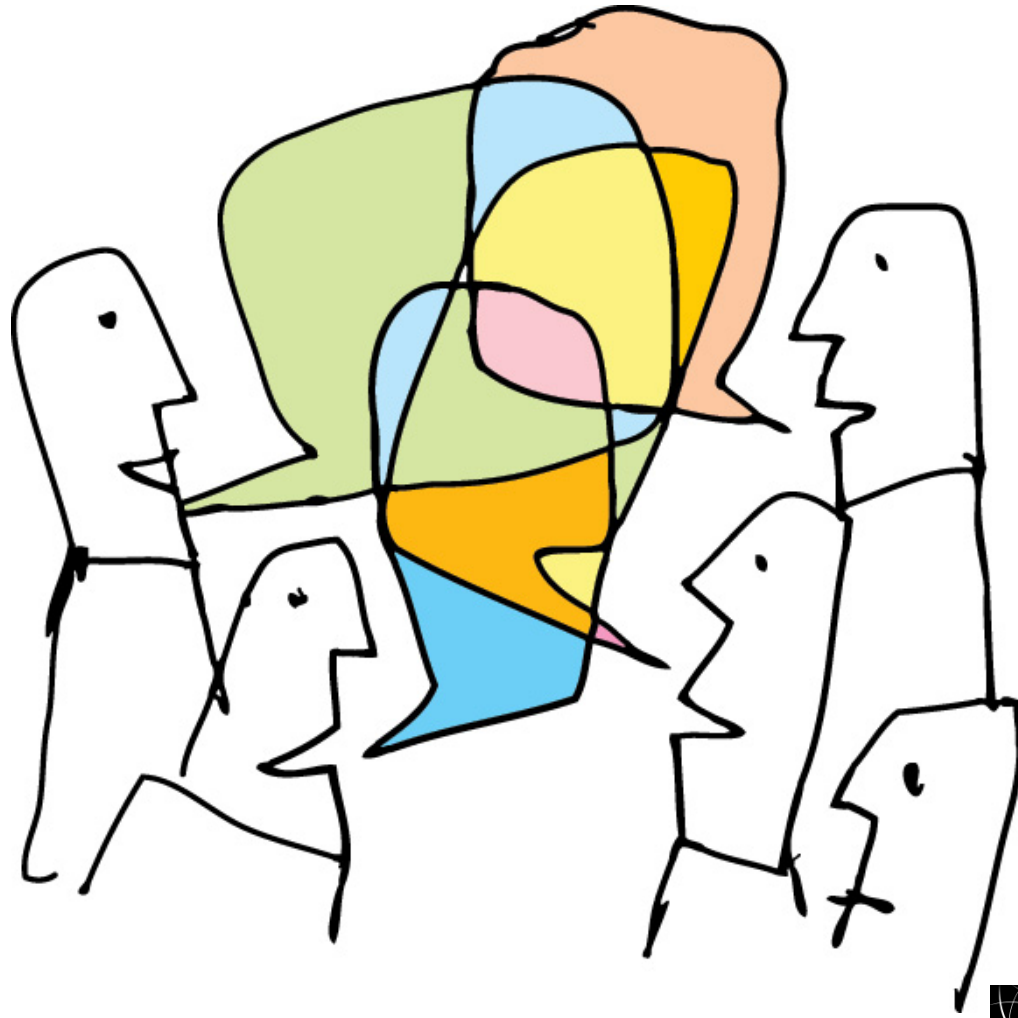
E-mail

LinkedIn profile

Cold calls

Conferences

*Play to your
strengths!*



Strategies for Success

- Prepare & practice conversation
- Play to your strengths
- Find common ground
- Start with who you know
- Don't pick favorite first
- Seek out alumni



Effective Follow-up



- You've gotta' give to get
- Thank you note is ***not*** overrated!
 - Do what the contact suggests
- Update contacts on your progress
- Don't overlook the intrinsic give-backs
 - Plan ahead & schedule follow-up

The Intersection of Your Priorities & Job Options

- Institutional/departmental characteristics
- Geographic preferences
- Alternative career paths & plans
- Dual careers/family considerations



Understand the Market

- Assess hiring outlook in your discipline
- How broad is the market?
- When, where & how are openings publicized?
- Research via professional associations, faculty & fellow students, publications



Alternative Academic Paths

- Non-tenure positions
- Lecturer
- Visiting/Adjunct
- Community colleges
- Online courses/institutions
- Non-academic options
(eg., consulting, think tanks)



Organize Your Search

- Maintain files of institutional information
- Record all contacts made
- Keep copies of correspondence
- Maintain record of personal impressions
- Record activity of others on your behalf
- Stay in touch with key contacts
- Maintain record of expenses



Resources

The Career Center

Rackham

Your Department/Program

CRLT

International Center

CEW

Other Graduate Students

LinkedIn

Professional Associations

Others?

Informational Interviewing

Connecting with Professionals Working in a Field of Interest

One of the best ways to learn about career and potential job prospects is to talk with individuals currently working in that field. This is called "informational interviewing." An informational interview may be conducted in person or via phone to help you gain knowledge about a field of choice. There are many options available for using your Ph.D. to make a contribution. You can go into basic research at an institution like Michigan, or you can choose a smaller institution primarily known for its teaching, or you may wish to investigate job alternatives. Whether you are still exploring and want to learn more basic information about a career path, or if you have decided on one and you are looking for tips on how to find the best jobs in that path--an informational interview is a fantastic resource.

Samples of information interview questions:

Below are some sample questions you can use in an informational interview. Keep in mind that an informational interview is designed to help you learn more, so *ask about what's important to you.*

General Question: How did you begin on this career path?

Forms it may take:

1. How did you get started?
2. What things did you do before you entered this line of work? Which have been most helpful?
3. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in your job?
4. How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
5. Why did you decide to work for this organization or institution?
6. What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?
7. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path? Why? What would you change?

General Question: What is your job like?

Forms it may take:

1. What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
2. Could you describe a typical day?
3. What kinds of problems do you deal with?
4. What kinds of decisions do you make?
5. What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
6. Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?

General Question: Could you tell me about your organization or institution?

Forms it may take:

1. What do you like most?
2. Who are your competitors?
3. How does your organization or institution differ from its competitors?
4. Who evaluates your performance?
5. Are you optimistic about the future of the organization or institution, and your future in it?
6. What does the organization/institution do to contribute to its employees' professional development?

General Question: Could you tell me about this field or occupation?

Forms it may take:

1. What does the future bring for your job or institution?
2. How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this institution or company?
3. What is the best way to enter this occupation?
4. Are there opportunities to move into different areas within the organization or institution?
5. What are the advancement opportunities?
6. What are the major qualifications for success?
7. If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?

General Question: What leads to success in your job?

Forms it may take:

1. What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?
2. What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program?
3. How well did graduate school or your post-doctoral position prepare you for this job?
4. What prior work or experience has proven to be the most valuable to you in your job? What would you recommend for me?

General Question: Could you tell me about the culture of your organization or institution?

Forms it may take:

1. How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
2. Is there a basic philosophy of the organization or institution and, if so, what is it?
3. What can you tell me about the culture where you work?
4. What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold? Are there incentives or disincentives for staying in the same job?
5. What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence)?

General Question: Would you be willing to share your professional opinion on my career accomplishments to date?

Forms it may take:

1. How would you assess the experience I've had so far in terms of entering this field?
2. Would you mind taking a look at my C.V.? *[If you feel comfortable asking and it seems appropriate]*
3. With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other options would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?

General Question: What is the job outlook for this type of position?

Forms it may take:

1. How does the economy affect your job?
2. What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your field?
3. What areas of research do you think are the hottest in the future?
4. What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field? Is there a salary ceiling?
5. What are the typical job titles and functions that are growing?

General Question: Are there other professionals or even written materials you could refer me to that would assist me further in my career exploration?

Forms it may take:

1. Who else do you know who is doing similar kinds of work or uses similar skills?
2. What other kinds of institutions or companies hire people to perform the functions you do here?
3. Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
4. How did you learn about this particular position/institution/company?
5. What resources you would recommend as I search for a job in this area?

Questions adapted from: www.quintcareers.com/information_interview.html

Building a Professional Community - Making a Plan

| Networking plan | Helpful resources |
|--|--|
| <p>I would like to network in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. | <p>If you need ideas for this area try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest inventories • Career description books • Career Exploration Panels • Job lists and postings • Job fairs/Employer presentations |
| <p>I'll try these ideas for looking for contacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Directories • Professional Meetings • Internet/Social Networking • Job fairs/Employer presentations • Papers I've read |
| <p>Here are people I plan to contact first:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty/Thesis committee/Adviser • Colleagues • Student organizations • Employer from fair • Friends/Family or people I know |
| <p>Here is what I would say when I introduce myself:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking books • Practicing with friends • Thesis adviser • Career Center resources |
| <p>Here are some questions I might ask:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout with sample questions • On-line resources • Career Center resources |
| <p>I plan to make ____ calls/emails per week.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post lists by the phone • Plan calls in my calendar/schedule |
| <p>I plan to conduct ____ interviews by (DATE)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put reminder notes in my calendar • Plan weekly summary with an advisor |

**Building a Professional Community through Information Interviewing:
You take the lead**

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | <i>Remember that you are being granted an opportunity and a favor.</i> You should do the majority of work setting up the appointment, making the call, etc. |
| 2 | <i>Follow-up on anything the contact has asked for in advance of the meeting or following a meeting.</i> Be it a C.V., manuscripts, a cover letter stating research and career interests, etc.—be sure to send it. This will help the contact pass your information on to other professionals and colleagues who might be interested. |
| 3 | <i>Be specific in your career goals and statements.</i> It is not up to the contact to define your interests. You can explore your interests and test out their viability, but be careful about appearing as if you “would do anything.” |
| 4 | <i>Do your homework.</i> If you are sent material before the meeting—read it! If there is information online, or in the career resource center — read it. |
| 5 | <i>Prepare questions.</i> You are conducting the interview, not the other way around. Be prepared to follow up and keep the conversation moving. |
| 6 | <i>Listen and write things down.</i> Often we are told golden nuggets of information during a networking exchange and fail to recognize it in the moment. If you listen carefully and write down information when able to, you will have time to review it when the pressure of the moment is off. |
| 7 | <i>Respect time constraints.</i> Be sure to ask your networking contact how much time he or she will allow for the discussion and respect that time limit. If it is a more casual conversation, a simple time check will do the trick and show you respect his or her time. For example, “I have a few more questions and I know you are busy, would you still have some time to talk?” |
| 8 | <i>Send a Thank you note.</i> It is just polite to send a thank you note when someone does you a favor, and it also allows you to follow up with any subsequent comments or questions you forgot to ask. Remember you are developing a connection that will be maintained throughout your professional life; Nurture it! |

Adapted from an article by Audrey Arkins on Salary.com