Wondering how to start networking? Read these tips on building your professional network!
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The Power of Networking

We've all heard people we know talk about someone that they know, who knows someone, who knows someone; this often works to your benefit as a job seeker. Networking is about connecting with people for the purpose of gathering career advice and information. These people can be family, friends, coworkers, fellow students, faculty, staff….the possibilities are endless!

You can network just about anywhere. Here are some common places that job seekers have luck finding contacts outside of their personal network:

- Job Fairs
- Professional Associations and Organizations
- Social Networking Sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc....)
- Meetings and conventions in your desired field

Now that you know WHERE to network, you need to know HOW to network. A good place to start is to develop your elevator speech; your elevator speech is a quick pitch about who you are, what you do and what you are looking for in a career. It should be about 30 seconds long; keep it clear and to the point. See page 4 for an outline to get you started on your speech.

Another way to network is to conduct informational interviews. An informational interview allows you to meet with a representative from your desired field and ask questions about the organization and the position that you are interested in. These interviews are done by contacting a member of the organization (at first, this will typically be someone in your network of contacts or someone you have been referred to by a direct contact) who you initiate contact with to schedule a 20-30 minute meeting.

Please see the next page for a list of questions you can use while networking or conducting an informational interview. Choose the questions that best apply to you, your field and what you are hoping to get out of the meeting.
Sample Networking and Informational Interviewing Questions

About the Career Field

- How large is the industry?
- What is the future outlook of the field?
- What parts of the industry will grow/decline over the next few years?
- Who are the major players?
- Will outsourcing continue to be a major factor?
- Which are the better organizations in my area of interest?
- Are there professional journals I should read or associations that I should join?

About the Organization

- How old/large is the organization?  What can you tell me about its history?
- Who are your major competitors?
- How is the organization structured?
- What are the growth/problem areas within the organization?  Which do you think would best match my background?
- What is the company culture/working environment like (success factors, stress levels, office accommodations, etc....)?
- What important challenges face the company now or in the future?

About the Job

- What are the major tasks of the position?
- What skills, qualifications and background are needed for this job?
- Could you describe a "typical" career path from entry level to management?  Is there a non-management career path?
- Are there alternative methods for gaining a position, e.g., volunteer, part-time work, internship?
- What is the expected entry level salary?
- Is my resume appropriate for a job in this field?  Do I need further skills or training?

About the Individual

- Could you tell me about your own professional background?
- What attracted you to the organization?
- What is your typical day like?
- What are the most challenging aspects of your job?
- What advice would you give to someone in my position?
- If an alum-how has your education from GSPIA helped in your job?  How did you market your degree?
- Could you recommend any other professionals in the field that I should talk to?  May I use your name as a referral?
Preparing for Your Informational Interview

Before the Informational Interview

- Always practice your interviewing skills!
- Research the organization; if possible, find out the contact’s background and direct questions accordingly.
- Prepare a list of questions tailored to the organization and the person you are meeting with.
- Update your resume and have someone else read it over for you.

During the Informational Interview

- Arrive on time, with a copy of your resume.
- Thank the representative for their time and state your objectives for the meeting at the onset of the conversation.
- Observe the overall job setting and environment.
- Take careful notes to review after the meeting.
- Remember you are there to conduct research and learn more about the company and field-do not ask for a job!

After the Meeting

- Send a thank you letter to the person that you met with, expressing your appreciation of their time and thoughts.
- Review your notes from the meeting and consider whether or not the field/company/position is a good fit for you and your skills.
- Take this time to also review your interviewing skills: what went well? What could be improved upon for future interviews?
- Stay organized-keep the notes and contact information from all interviews and meetings in one place so that you can easily refer back to them.
- Remember that networking and informational interviewing is an ongoing process—you may not find exactly what you need on the first few tries.
# The Elevator Speech: Marketing Yourself

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<th>Your Profession and Expertise</th>
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<td>- Your field and area of interest</td>
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<td>- Your skills and knowledge; what you know and what you can do</td>
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<td>- Your education</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Your Experience</th>
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<td>- The breadth of your experience across sectors</td>
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<td>- The depth of your experience within a sector or profession</td>
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<td>- The level of experience</td>
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<td>- The amount of experience</td>
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<tr>
<th>Your Strengths &amp; Key Selling Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>- What you are really good at doing</td>
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<td>- What people say about you</td>
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<th>Accomplishments</th>
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<tr>
<td>- The best thing you've done</td>
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<td>- The toughest problem you've solved</td>
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<td>- The biggest challenge you've overcome</td>
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<td>- Awards/Accolades</td>
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| Your Professional Objective/Career Goals |  |