Networking

Working to support our military veterans in cooperation with Accenture

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The essence of networking

**Networking** is the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups or institutions, or the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business opportunities.

Networking involves creating opportunities through:

- Meeting people
- Making contacts
- Building strong relationships

These relationships grow over time and form other contacts, relationships and opportunities.

Your network can be a significant resource for helping you find employment and grow in your career.
How do you build a network?

Building and maintaining your network is a continual process and should become something that you incorporate into your everyday life.

- Understand who you know and who you need to know.
- Go to where they are.
- Meet people and make an impact.
- Continue to expand your network.
Network map example

Your network includes individuals from all aspects of your life.
Basic networking principles

Prepare for networking

- Take advantage of social and networking opportunities.
- Get involved (veteran organizations, business groups, community/church, professional networking groups and hobby/interest groups).
- Do your research! Keep up on news and current events.
- Leverage contacts from professional network.
- Prepare your elevator speech and walking web page. (Refer to the Writing Your Elevator Speech Quick Reference Card.)

During conversations — remember:

- Don’t be afraid to simply introduce yourself.
- Be aware of your language and tone.
- Listen.
- Talk about your interests.
- Ask open-ended questions — who, what, where, when and how.
- Be genuine and approachable (smile, be interested and nod).
Effective networking relies on building and leveraging relationships with others. Meeting new people and having productive conversations are a key part of this. Consider the following tips to set yourself up for success:

- **Set a goal** to meet new people and not just stay with people you already know.
- **Do your prep work** — know who is going to be at an event/meeting, if you can.
- **Position yourself** in places where people tend to gravitate (for example, food or bar areas, or by windows).
- **Initiate a greeting** (make eye contact, offer a firm handshake and introduce yourself).
- **Find common ground**.
- **Ask open-ended questions** versus yes or no questions (refer to next slide for examples).
- **Listen** more than you speak (apply active listening techniques).
- **Find opportunities to say the person’s name** in the conversation so that you will remember it.
- **Bring business cards** (but not your resume).
- **End conversations by planning for a follow-up** (if appropriate).
## Conversation tips

### Possible conversation starters

- How long have you been with your company? Why did you join? What keeps you at the company?
- How do you explain your job to your family?
- What university did you go to, and what did you study?
- Favorite or most challenging project or experience at your company?
- What advice would you give to your younger self, professionally and/or personally?
- What do you consider to be the most valuable aspects of your job: people, benefits or the work? Why?

### Tips during conversation

- Don’t interrupt the person speaking. If it is important to interrupt, you can interject with something like, “Sorry to interrupt you, but … ”
- If three or more people are in discussion, be patient and look for an opportunity to contribute to the discussion on a relevant point.
- Don’t say anything negative about a past job experience or professional affiliation.
- If possible, ask questions to find out what challenges the organization you’re interested in is facing. Every challenge presents an opportunity for you to show capability of adding value.
- “Name drop” (or provide names of people you know, who will serve as good references) when appropriate.
Final tips

Networking will play a important role as you establish and grow in your career. As you begin to grow your network remember these final tips:

- **Put yourself out there.**
  - “Accept the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of victory.” — George S. Patton

- **Think broadly about your network.**
  - Professional affiliations, volunteering events, sports teams and veterans organizations are among the great places to expand your network.

- **Do your homework.**
  - If you were going on a blind date, wouldn’t you at least try to find out if you had anything in common? Why not do this with others whom you meet?

- **Differentiate yourself.**
  - Dare to be different. Find out what employers are interested in and highlight your skills that apply (be careful not to over-embellish).

- **Follow-up after the network event, if appropriate.**
  - Lock in a follow-up meeting through a phone call and follow through.
  - If appropriate, send a thank-you email.

- **Be conscious of your virtual network.**
  - Virtual networks like Facebook or LinkedIn are great tools to help network, but be aware of what you post for the rest of the world to see. (Refer to the [Managing Your Online Presence Quick Reference Card](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/g/geourge_s__patton.html.).)
