



# NETWORKING GUIDE

Uncover Potential  
Employment Opportunities

# Networking

## Networking Opens Doors

Networking is a primary job search strategy. In networking, students use personal and industry contact “networks” to uncover potential employment opportunities in their chosen field. Since only about 25% of all professional positions are advertised, most job vacancies are filled through networking and personal referrals.

We've all heard the expression “it's who you know” and in job hunting, it couldn't be more true. Surveys show that 70-80% of all positions are obtained by networking, so it's a very useful technique to learn.

## Information Interviews

Information interviews are 20-30 minute appointments that enable you to speak with professionals in jobs/career fields of interest. These interviews enable you to gain information about careers from an “insider” perspective. Information interviews are free of pressure because you are not “selling” yourself to an employer as you are in an employment interview.

Information interviews can often be arranged regardless of existing job opportunities and are arranged with professionals who can provide direct information or refer you to others who can assist with your job search. Information interviews are helpful if you are in the process of choosing an academic major, making career choices, changing careers, or beginning a job hunt. An information interview is excellent job search and networking option.

## Why Do an Information Interview?

- To gain valuable information for job hunting and career planning (i.e., choosing a specific career/job). You can compare the information gained in an interview with what you've read, been told, or believe.
- To learn about a particular organization, how you might fit in, and what problems or needs the employer has. Knowing these things will help you gear your qualifications towards the needs of the organization.
- To gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals through by discussing yourself and your career interests.
- To establish/expand your circle of contacts in a career field. Who you know can be as important as what you know in getting a job.
- To ask for other referrals. (“Can you suggest other people that I might talk to about careers in this field?”)

## Who Should You Contact?

Even if you don't know many people (yet) locating people to speak with is fairly easy. Search for people who:

- Share a common academic major or interest, enthusiasm or involvement in some activity or lifestyle that appeals to you.
- Work in a setting you like (e.g., hotels, convention centers, restaurants, incentive travel companies, airlines).
- Work in career areas you're interested in (e.g., hotel or restaurant management, event planning, theme park operations).
- Work in specific jobs in specific organizations (e.g., human resources specialist at JW Marriott, assistant manager at Orange Lake Golf and Country Club).

## Where to Find People to Interview

- Ask faculty, Career Services/Co-op staff, employers, Rosen College alumni, friends, family, neighbors, classmates, co-workers—anyone you know—for an information interview or for a referral.
- Call trade and professional organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Information Management Association). Attend meetings (local, state, regional) for professional associations in your career interest field(s) (e.g., CFHLA, MPI, ISES, PCMA, HSMAT).
- Search trade journals, magazines, newspapers.

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## Preparing for an Information Interview

Be prepared! Most people will be willing to speak with you about their jobs/professions, but prepare in advance so you don't waste their (and your time). Know your interests, skills, and values and how they relate to the career field represented by the persons you're interviewing.

Read about the career area and organization in which the person you'll be interviewing is engaged. Know exactly what kinds of information you want by having a list of questions in mind. Avoid asking for routine information that is easy to access elsewhere. First, look at materials in the Career Services or Rosen College Libraries for information. If no printed materials are available, you may want to call and ask the organization to send you any public literature they have (annual report, promotional brochures, etc.). You can also check the Internet for any web sites associated with the organization or career field in which you're interested. Use the following list of questions to help in formulating your own.

## Possible Questions for the Information Interview

1. **Background:** Tell me how you got started in this field. What was your education? What educational background or related experience might be helpful in entering this field?
2. **Work Environment:** What are the daily duties of the job? What are the working conditions? What skills/abilities are utilized in this work?
3. **Problems:** What are the toughest problems you deal with? What problems does the organization as a whole have? What is being done to solve these problems?
4. **Life Style:** What obligation does your work put on you outside the work week? How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, work hours, vacations?
5. **Rewards:** What do you find most rewarding about this work, besides the money?
6. **Salary:** What salary level would a new person start with? What are the fringe benefits? What are other forms of compensation? (bonuses, commissions, securities).
7. **Potential:** Where do you see yourself going in a few years? What are your long term goals?
8. **Promotional:** Is turnover high? How does one move from position to position? Do people normally move to another hotel/restaurant/department? What is your policy about promotions from within? What happened to the person(s) who last held this position? How many have held this job in the last 5 years? How are employees evaluated?
9. **The Industry:** What trends do you see for this industry in the next 3 to 5 years? What kind of future do you see for this organization? How much of your business is tied to (the economy, government spending, weather, supplies, etc.)?
10. **Advice:** How well-suited is my background for this field? When the time comes, how would I go about finding a job in this field? What experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend? What suggestions do you have to help make my resume more effective?
11. **Demand:** What types of employers hire people in this line of work? Where are they located? What other career areas do you feel are related to your work?
12. **Hiring Decision:** What are the most important factors used to hire people in this work (education, past experience, personality, special skills). Who makes the hiring decisions for your department? Who supervises the boss? When I am ready to apply for a job, who should I contact?
13. **Job Market:** How do people find out about your jobs? Are they advertised in the newspaper (which ones?), by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?), by the personnel office?
14. **Referral to Other Information Opportunities:** Can you name a relevant trade journal or magazine you would recommend I review? What professional organizations might have information about this career area?
15. **Referral to Others:** Based on our conversation today, what other types of people do you believe I should talk to? Can you name a few of these people? May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?
16. **General:** Do you have any other advice for me?

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## How to Arrange the Interview

1. Phone or write to explain your request and obtain an appointment (see sample letter and email request for an appointment).
2. Introduce yourself using a personal referral. If possible, have a mutual acquaintance or Career/Co-op Services be the bridge for your contact. (e.g., "I'm Marlene Baxter, a junior at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. I received your name from the Career Services Office).
3. Explain your request to schedule an appointment for gathering information about the person's career. ***If questioned, indicate clearly that you are not seeking a job but are merely conducting career research that will help you make decisions.***
4. Schedule a 20-30 minute appointment in person or by phone at his/her convenience. If the present time is too busy for the person you contact, ask when a better (future) time might be.
5. If your intent is to make a personal, face-to-face interview appointment. It's best not let your phone call to schedule the appointment turn into the actual interview. Remember to ask for directions and parking information.
6. Letter requests for appointments are most effective if followed up by a telephone inquiry to confirm an appointment time.

## Tips for Handling the Information Interview

- Do not exceed your requested time, but be prepared to stay longer in case the contact indicates a willingness to talk longer.
- Dress as if it were an actual job interview. First impressions are always important.
- Get to your appointment a few minutes early and BE COURTEOUS to everyone that you meet—secretary, receptionist, etc.
- Take the initiative in conducting the interview. The interview is in your ball park. You ask the questions, you interview the person. Ask open-ended questions which promote a discussion and cannot be answered with one word responses.
- Once inside the organization, look around. What kind of working environment is there (e.g., dress style, communication patterns, sense of humor, etc.)? Is this a place you would want to work?

## Follow-up

Evaluate your experience. How did you do with scheduling and conducting the information interview? How sufficiently did you prepare? Did you get the information you sought? What information do you still lack? Do you need to interview more people in order to get more than one biased viewpoint or additional information? What do you need to do next?

***Follow-up with a thank-you note.*** You might thank them for their time and interest as well as cite your conclusions/decisions resulting from the interview. You may decide to follow-up now or later with a resume and an application letter or form.

Record the information that you obtained: names, comments, and new referrals for future reference. Make appointments to interview the referrals.

## Summary

After doing several information interviews you will be more informed. You will be able to make better decisions which are based on accurate, current information.

- If you were trying to choose a major, you now are more familiar with various career paths a major might lead to. You also may have learned numerous methods to prepare for a particular career, not only through academic majors, but also work experience and college activities.
- If you were trying to choose an occupation, you now are more aware of position titles, job descriptions and qualifications, types of employers, the skills utilized, as well as the interests and values expressed in several occupations.
- If you were preparing for a job hunt, you now are more familiar with potential employer contacts and the

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hiring process. You have developed your interviewing skills and received feedback on your resume and job hunting strategies. You have also demonstrated assertive job hunting behaviors by selecting, scheduling, participating in, and following through interview appointments.

## Sample Networking Letter

10 Grace Court, Apt. 26  
Orlando, FL 33410

June 21, 2008

Elena Ginsberg  
Director of Catering  
Gaylord Palms Resort and Conference Center  
6000 Osceola Parkway  
Kissimmee, FL 33142

Dear Ms. Ginsberg:

I received your name from a directory in the Career Services office at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. I am in my Junior year at UCF, and am greatly interested in careers in Catering Services. I am not writing to ask you for a job, but I was hoping you could share your insight and knowledge about your own career path with me.

I would like to discuss where to look for employment opportunities and what steps I can take to prepare myself for a Catering Services career. I am greatly interested in learning how you started out and hearing any recommendations you could give me for living and working in the Catering field.

In order that you may know more about me, I have enclosed my resume. At the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, I am specializing in food services management and have taken a number of courses and am currently working fulltime at a restaurant. These experiences have assisted in my career planning, but I would welcome any advice you could give me.

If possible, I would like to set up a time to speak with you. I could call you to arrange a time or I can be reached at 407-356-6795 or via my e-mail, [bmcclendon@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:bmcclendon@mail.ucf.edu). I would greatly appreciate any guidance and advice you could give me.

Sincerely,

*Brian McClendon*

Brian McClendon

Enclosure

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## Sample Networking E-mail

**Suggested Subject Line:** Rosen College Student Seeking Career Advice

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently a graduating senior at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management and I obtained your name through the Career Services office. I am interested in exploring the field of convention planning at a hotel or convention center in the Greater Orlando area. I am writing to you because of your position as an event planner at the Gaylord Palms Convention Center. If possible, I would like to arrange a time to meet or talk with you about your position and the event management field in general.

I have experience as a catering intern at the Airport Marriott and have volunteered for special events at the Orange County Convention Center. Working at the Marriott allowed me to see first hand the intricacies of planning and executing weddings, corporate events and private parties. At the Orange County Convention Center I had the opportunity to assist with event set-up, ticket distribution, and vendor interaction.

At the Rosen College, I have pursued a Bachelor's Degree in hospitality management with a specialization in event management. Through my coursework and practical experience, I have developed an in-depth understanding of the event planning field, and I am intrigued by your profession.

I would like to arrange a time to further discuss your event management career and experiences and to ask for your advice about ways a recent college graduate could enter your field and become successful. I appreciate that your time is valuable and I would be grateful for any advice you may have for me. I will call you within the week to follow up on this email and schedule a time to speak with you that is convenient for you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Name

E-mail

Address

Phone Number (optional)

This is simply a model letter. ***Please remember to put similar thoughts in your own writing.*** Many students use this guide and if specific sentences are copied, your letter may not be considered to be credible.

