Effective networking involves establishing and maintaining contacts and relationships that will help you learn and grow both professionally and personally. In fact, approximately 70% of job opportunities are found through networking. Learning how to network is especially important for students navigating the job market. Many positions are no longer “posted” on a job board. Instead, they are usually found through internal references. Professional contacts can help you during a job search and beyond. You never know when a networking contact may become an employer, client, or business partner.

Importance of Networking

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Identify Networking Opportunities

When forming your list of network contacts, don’t leave anyone out! The obvious candidates include professors and previous employers. The less obvious choices are varied and can include:

- Professional / student organizations
- Civic / community groups
- Volunteer organizations
- Upperclassmen
- Texas Exes
- Previous co-workers
- McCombs & UT alumni groups (see McCombs Alumni Resources, McCombs School Directory, or LinkedIn)
- Contacts from internships
- LinkedIn contacts
- Previous and current recruiters
- Friends and family
- Family friends and friends’ families
- Mentors
- Religious communities

Utilize Networking Tools

Everyone can set up a network of contacts. With a positive attitude and the right tools, your dream job could be one contact away. If you think you’ve never networked before, get ready to be proven wrong. Every introduction you’ve had is another start to a potential professional contact. Informational interviews are a great way to continue growing your network.

Networking lists can be very useful for organizing contacts and keeping track of details. Networking can sometimes feel tedious and time-consuming. Establishing, maintaining, and following up on network contacts is a continual process that takes time and energy; however, your efforts will pay off in the end.
**Informational Interviews**

Informational interviews can be one of the most valuable sources of occupational information and are a great networking technique. They give you an opportunity to obtain relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry, or position. Conducting informational interviews will expand your network, improve your confidence when speaking with professionals, and help you learn more about an industry, company, profession, or position. You can interview a wide range of contacts, including students with internships, McCombs alumni, current employees, or professors.

**Sample Informational Interview Request**

**Informational Interview Request Email**

*Subject Line of Email Message:*
Request for informational interview

*Email Message:*

Dear Ms. Wilson,

My name is Lucy Longhorn, and I am currently a [classification] at the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin. I plan to declare [Major] here at McCombs, and I am interested in working in [Industry, company, or position of interest].

I found your name in the McCombs Alumni Directory, and I wanted to reach out to you to learn more about the career path you have taken.

OR

I saw on LinkedIn that you have worked for both [Company A] and [Company B], and I would really like to hear your perspective on what it takes to break into the industry.

OR

My cousin, John Doe, recommended I contact you to learn more about the industry and your career path.

I will be in Houston from December 12 - January 2. Would you be available to meet with me for about 20 - 30 minutes while I am in town? Thank you so much for considering my request.

OR

Would you have about 20 minutes for me to learn more about your experience via a Zoom meeting or phone call? Thank you so much for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Lucy Longhorn

Lucy.Longhorn@utexas.edu
McCombs BBA, May 2022
512-555-5555

**Reminders about Informational Interviews**

- Use informational interviews to learn about an industry, profession, company, or a position within a specific company
- Select people who have skills, experiences, and knowledge you find interesting
- Make your requests short and simple—try to stay within about 100 words
- Prepare questions in advance by researching the company and industry
- DO NOT present a resume in an informational interview; this is not the time to ask for a job
- ALWAYS send a thank you email or note and remember to maintain your group of contacts; one contact can lead to multiple business and social contacts
Networking Tracker

Maintaining a networking tracker will help you organize communication with your contacts. Keep a list of everyone you know who may be influential in your job search process. Note the actions you expect to carry out to involve them in your career planning (e.g., set up an informational interview, request advice, provide resume, ask about job opportunities). Update contacts after they have given you any leads or assistance; this is a great way to maintain your group of contacts and show appreciation. Reciprocate when the opportunity arises. Be sure to stay in touch with your network by contacting them every few months or so with updates about your recruiting or academic progress and any new questions you may have. The following table is an example of how you can organize and manage your networking list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Professional title and full name of the individual that you are connecting with.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Name</td>
<td>Current company name that the person is working at and any past experiences that he/she mentions (past internships, companies, etc.). This is beneficial and resourceful when you are not certain of what industry or company you want to recruit for and can reconnect with the individual you connected with for additional information later on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Industry the individual is currently working in and take note of past industries that he/she worked in previously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Individual's professional email address affiliated with their organization to send thank you follow-up email and reference to later on during recruiting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>If the individual provides their own personal phone number or the informational interview was conducted via phone call, then record it into the networking tracker; however, if the informational interview or coffee chat was conducted through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. do not ask for her/his personal number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Write down how you connected or met the individual (whether they was referred to you by an upper-classman in an organization or a family friend) and write the connection between you and the individual (e.g., Major, Student Organization, etc).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Contacted</td>
<td>Last time you contacted the individual and update the date accordingly for future reference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up Status</td>
<td>Track whether or not you sent a thank you email to the individual, which should be done within 24 hours of the informational interview, coffee chat, or informal call. Mark with either need to send email OR sent email and update if you received a response back from the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up Plan</td>
<td>If you plan on following up with the individual to ask additional questions, such as choosing career pathways, recruiting process, how to prepare for interview, write down the next contact date or phone interview date with bullet points on what you are going to ask at the next call.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Document what was discussed during the phone or video call for future reference. This is especially helpful when writing the follow up thank you email, where you can mention specific topics and critical points mentioned in the informational interview, coffee chat, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample LinkedIn Connection Request

LinkedIn is a powerful professional networking site. Reach out with a personalized message such as the example below.

I'm really interested in your background, and I am hoping you may be open to connecting. I’d like to ask you a few questions about the [insert position title] position at your company. My goal is to work in [insert industry] after I graduate from UT and I would love some advice.

- Lucy Longhorn
Career Fair Preparation

Career fairs, like the McCombs Career Expo in the fall and spring, are the perfect setting for meeting great contacts. Companies will send a handful of recruiters ready to meet students and answer questions. Recruiters attend to meet students and share information about their organization and current job opportunities. However, just like you, hundreds of other students are vying for those prime job openings. Your preparation and presentation are keys to standing out and achieving your career planning objectives. Use the following guidelines to prepare for recruiting events.

1. Do Your Homework
   - Try to know as much as you can about the organizations you plan to talk to at the event
   - Research companies and find out who and what they are looking for
   - Know who you want to meet and why you think the company is right for you

2. Dress to Impress
   - Polished business professional dress is typically best for career fairs
   - For in person career fairs don’t bring a lot of extra items; all you need is a leather portfolio for resumes and business cards. Have your resume on hand during virtual career fairs.
   - Review the required dress for any in person or virtual event prior to attending

3. Plan Your Strategy
   - Circle the room once to determine which companies to talk to and where they’re located
   - Start with companies that don’t have a long line
   - Smile as you approach and always maintain eye contact
   - If you have a first-choice employer, don’t wait until the end to talk to them; meet them when you are still fresh

4. Make Contact
   - Be the first to extend a hand; shaking hands shows you’re eager to interact
   - Open with a simple, “Hello! How are you?” or introduce yourself, “Hi! My name is [first and last name]. How are you?”
   - Use the 60-Second Introduction as needed to initiate conversation
   - Give a firm handshake before and after a conversation and thank the recruiter for his/her time

5. Listen and Learn
   - Ask open-ended questions to gather more information about the company and listen to answers
   - Remember, you are trying to showcase yourself as a personable individual first and as a talented job candidate second
   - Do not monopolize the recruiter’s time

6. Cover Your Bases
   - Ask for business cards or jot down people’s names and emails
   - Send a thank you email or handwritten note after the event
   - Include stories or topics of discussion from your conversation to personalize your correspondence
   - Review the Job Search Correspondence guide for more information

Tips for Virtual Career Fairs
Much of the preparation for virtual career fairs will be identical to an in person event, so ensure that you have conducted company/industry/position research and have dressed to impress with an appropriate background. We also recommend:

Preparing for the Virtual Career Fair
   - Register/RSPV sooner rather than later! Some platforms or employers may require sign-up in advance.
   - Learn as much as you can about the career fair platform. Attend or view demos or student trainings, so that you are comfortable with the technology and understand how you will be interact with employers during the fair (Be aware that every platform is different. Some will incorporate text chat, video chat, and scheduled times to meet with employers while other platforms may not have prescheduled timeslots.).
   - Employer conversations may be timed, so research companies in advance and be prepared to answer questions quickly.
   - Review your resume and LinkedIn profile. Attend Peer Coach virtual drops in to have recruiting documents reviewed.
• Practice your Elevator Pitch/30 Second Introduction (Utilize Big Interview to rehearse on video). Think about how you would introduce yourself to an employer over a text chat.
• Prepare questions to ask employers via chat or video.
• Test your technology and internet speed. See Virtual Interviewing Tips for more advice on preparing technology and presenting your best self on video.

During the Virtual Fair
• Have your resume and LinkedIn profile URL available to provide or reference, and have employer questions available.
• When communicating via text chat with employers use professional communication. Avoid emoticons, slang, bad grammar, and text/chat abbreviations.
• Be confident! Prepare thoroughly, and you will feel ready to engage with employers.
• Document who you meet with, takes notes, and ask about next steps.

Post Virtual Career Fairs
• Thank any employers you meet within 24-48 hours as you would for an in person event.
• Follow-up on any action items given to you by employers.

The 60-Second Introduction

The 60-Second Introduction is your best strategy to initiate conversation in a variety of networking situations (e.g., career fairs, interviews, business dinners, etc.). When you only have a limited amount of time with a recruiter, the 60-Second Introduction serves as a brief yet effective introduction to guide you smoothly into your conversation.

To develop your succinct and personalized introduction, it is necessary to assess your skills, strengths, accomplishments, and goals. Your introduction will continue to evolve as you practice them throughout your career.

You may need to shorten your introduction to 30 seconds at a networking reception, career fair, or other situation where time is limited. Your introduction can also answer the common “Tell me about yourself” question. You may also hear these introductions called the “30-Second Introduction,” your “Commercial,” or your “Elevator Pitch.” This introduction will also be relevant in virtual recruiting opportunities.

The content of the 60-Second Introduction is predictable, however, the preparation and practice required is not. You will distinguish yourself if you can do this well. In order to assemble the information for your 60-Second Introduction, you should review your relevant experience. You may follow the examples given and include background, education, etc.; or, you may focus on your unique capabilities and strengths and how they fit into a work environment. It is not necessary to cover all the points listed. Use your judgment about what highlights your skills and abilities the best. Practice the following structure enough to become comfortable with, but avoid sounding rehearsed or impersonal.

What Should I Include in My Introduction?
• **Opening Line**
  “Hi! How are you?”
• **Who are you?**
  What makes you interesting? Include a unique point that can connect to the interviewer or to the position. Talk about something memorable yet professional.
• **Education**
  Mention your BBA degree, major, and any honors or awards. Discuss a significant activity that you are involved in or a concentration that applies to the position for which you are interviewing. Why did you choose your major?
• **Work Experience/Internships/Academic Projects/Case Competitions**
  Talk about any internships you’ve had, positions you’ve held, or projects on which you’ve enjoyed working, including those in the workplace or with student organizations. Don’t get too specific, just touch on some major accomplishments.
• **Why do you want to work here?**
  Emphasize why you chose the specific company, how enthusiastic you are about job opportunities at the company, and the skills you have that make you a good fit for this company. Explain what you have to offer this organization.

• **End with an engaging question**
  Doing this will turn your introduction into a conversation. Ask an open-ended question about something that you cannot find through information on their website or company press releases. Make sure your question is appropriate and avoid controversial topics and negativity.

Follow Up: Maintaining Your Network

Following up is integral for successful networking. By following up, you are sealing the networking link between you and your contact. The easiest and most common way to follow up today is through email. However, handwritten notes make a lasting impression, as they come across as more personal and are a rarity in today’s internet-driven world. Regardless of the format you choose, genuinely thank your contact for their help in your job search and include a topic or anecdote from your conversation to personalize your correspondence. Be sure to provide all your contact information to ensure convenient communication with you. You can find sample thank you notes in the *Job Search Correspondence* guide.

Social Networking

Social networking tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are a ubiquitous part of our social landscape and can help or harm your job search efforts. Companies are increasingly moving toward social media to recruit and screen candidates. Exercise caution when creating and updating these or similar accounts. Make sure that your privacy settings are limited so that potential employers cannot view your profile or postings. Do not post questionable or controversial content.

LinkedIn is a great tool for professional networking. LinkedIn is not like other social media. It is a professional community that gives you a digital platform to present and promote yourself to potential employers. Join the “McCombs BBA Career Management Mentor Network” to find professional mentors. You can also search for alumni through the McCombs and UT pages to connect with Longhorns at almost every company or industry imaginable. Make sure that your LinkedIn profile includes a professional-looking headshot, and limit posts to positive, professional, and well-written comments. If you have questions about setting up your LinkedIn profile, refer to the *Creating Your LinkedIn Profile* handout, visit the LinkedIn student resource page (https://students.linkedin.com/), or meet with your BBA Career Coach.