

Networking Tips

Why Network?

Networking is about developing and fostering new relationships within and outside of your organization. Therefore, your ability to be connected within McMaster and externally with your network positions you for future opportunities. Becoming part of a network allows you to share knowledge and expertise, pursue leads, gather information regarding career interests and help others. Developing a network takes time, it involves building long-lasting relationships so that you are able to reach out to people when you need them - so be patient!

Preparing Your Introduction

Your introduction should be positive, brief and convey key pieces of information about you when reaching out to others in-person, by phone or by email. Consider the questions below when preparing your introduction. Ask yourself if you will be able to repeat your answers, if others will be curious about you, and whether others will be able to remember and repeat what you shared the next day. Remember to practice your introduction to ensure it confidently describes who you are.

- What is my track record? What gives me credibility?
- In what area(s) do I have experience?
- What do I do and how do I do it?
- What have I accomplished? What makes me stand out from others who do what I do?
- What value do I bring?
- What is my style of working? What are my career interests?
- What are my transferrable skills that would assist me obtaining a new role?

Source: Perfecting Connecting, Sarah Michael

Who Should Be In Your Network

Inside your organization, you should network with...

- People within your own work group
- People below your level
- People at your own level
- People one or more levels up

Outside your organization, you should network with...

- People in the same industry / business
- People in similar jobs
- People in jobs you'd like to move to
- People who are potential clients, customers, or suppliers
- People whose perspective is totally different from yours

Who are your network shakers?

- Leaders in your industry / organization
- Prominent people in your community
- Mentors / Teachers
- Friends / Acquaintances
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)

Source: Great Connections

Using Social Media for Networking

Professional networking websites such as LinkedIn (<https://ca.linkedin.com/school/mcmaster-university/>) provide a platform for individuals to connect with colleagues and peers online and engage in professional networking discussions.

Reciprocate

The key to successful networking is reciprocity – both parties must benefit from the conversations. This does not necessarily mean returning favours right away, but keeping the line of communication open in case you can be helpful to that individual some day. The important thing is that they believe you are genuinely interested in helping them achieve their goals and will support them in doing so if necessary. Be sincere!

Source: How to build lasting relationships – HRP Knowledge Bank

Networking Questions

Establishing networking relationships involves asking engaging questions. The sample questions below can help to establish rapport and general discussion. Sometimes networking conversations can lead to an impromptu informational interview. The questions you ask are dependent on your networking objectives and conversations. Use these questions as a general guideline and create your own accordingly.

1. What do you do and what department are you with? How long have you been with McMaster?
2. What is the department's mandate? What key projects or objectives are you focused on for the year?
3. I am really interested in learning more about this area of work. Are you available to meet for coffee to discuss this?
4. Can you suggest anyone else who could provide more information and/or share different perspectives?
5. What recommendations do you have for someone with my background to break into this area of work?
6. What qualities do you look for in (name the position) that would give you confidence in that person? Do you think that my skills and experience would be seen as transferable to _____?
7. What suggestions can you offer to help me prepare for future opportunities (if known, provide specifics)?
8. Which of my capabilities would you suggest I emphasize more strongly?
9. What knowledge and skills would you say are most valuable in this type of work?
10. What additional qualifications or experience do I need to make myself more marketable?
11. What professional associations or groups can you recommend would enhance my career opportunities?

How to say “Thank You”

- Always thank the individual who has met or spoken with you for their time and input.
- Taking the time to say thank you helps reinforce professionalism and maintains the connections that have been built.
- This can be done through a thank you note, phone call, or e-mail.

Leverage Networking Opportunities

- It is important to leverage your involvement with events, forums and volunteering to create networking opportunities.
- Attend meetings and events regularly. Build a base of support with regular members and position yourself with new members as someone in the know.
- Join a committee. Take a leadership role in the group and interact with members at a more meaningful level. Show them what you can contribute.
- Raise your visibility. Offer to organize an event, round up a speaker or greet people at meetings.
- Volunteering helps you demonstrate your skills, give back to a worthy cause and take advantage of the networking opportunities.

Source: Liz Lynch, 102 Secrets to Smarter Networking

Links to internal volunteer opportunities:

<http://www.workingatmcmaster.ca/volunteering/>

Links to external volunteer opportunities:

[Volunteer Canada](#) | [Volunteer.Ca](#)

Charity Village | [Charityvillage.Com](#)

Volunteer Hamilton | [Volunteerhamilton.On.Ca](#)

Best Practices

1. **Make** your primary contacts the friends and colleagues who know and respect your accomplishments and really want to help you.
2. Observe common and even uncommon courtesies. Ask if the person has time to talk to you. Be flexible about his or her schedule. Don't expect to network on company time – you must invest your own time as well. Determine a meeting place that's mutually convenient. Be ready to pick up the tab and leave a tip. If your contact offers to split the tab, accept graciously.
3. Don't jump the gun. Allow your contact to determine the timing.
4. Move beyond the superficial. Handing a business card to someone does not constitute a networking relationship.
5. Make contacts based on your achievements, not your needs. That's another way of saying to look at what you can give, as well as what you want to get in the networking exchange.
6. Be specific and honest about what you want. Be clear about what you're asking to make the most of your networking efforts.
7. Don't make unreasonable requests.
8. Pay your dues. Remember, effective networking is always reciprocal. It's an exchange. Have something to give and give generously; don't expect just to take.
9. Be helpful to others. Inevitably, you will benefit from contact with someone whom you can't immediately – or perhaps even – pay back.
10. Learn to praise your own skills and be confident about what you can offer. It's perfectly all right to promote yourself or market your skills.