Building professional relationships: pragmatic advice for the human scientist

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Introductions

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What words come to mind when you hear “networking?”

Word cloud generated from live webinar participants’ responses
Why people dislike the word “networking”
WHAT IS NETWORKING?
WHY IS IT BENEFICIAL?
Networking! = Building Professional Relationships

...connecting with people in your profession

....an informational exchange between you and someone else (so you network every day!)
We are better when we network, work together

You are a human first!

• Be true to you.
• Remember to be kind and thankful.
• Be honest.
• Return the favor, or pay it forward.
Why is networking beneficial?

• You can make things happen for you and for others when your network is strong & wide.

• Your ‘reach’ in what you can do is longer by having a network.

• A network grows in time, and will encompass those you train.

• 60-80% of job opportunities are found through networking.

• An open network is the best predictor of career success (Business Insider, Jan 2015)
WHAT TO EXPECT OF PEOPLE IN YOUR NETWORK
## Types of professional relationships*

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<td>• Give guidance to help you act more effectively</td>
<td>• Watch out for useful opportunities on your behalf</td>
<td>• Suggest you as a suitable candidate</td>
<td>• Take a long-term interest in your career dev.</td>
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<td>• Give answers to specific questions</td>
<td>• Suggest a strategy for you based on their experience</td>
<td>• Notify you of relevant new developments</td>
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*courtesy of Mistie Germek, BRET Psychologist, Vanderbilt University*
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**Acquaintance**

**Mentor**

**Time**
ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL NETWORKING
General pointers for successful networking

• Reflect on your individual personality.

• Establish goals for the relationship and/or develop questions for the person before your initiate contact. What can you bring to the relationship?

• Ask your mentor or another contact for an introduction.
Connecting at conferences

- Choose conferences carefully.
  - Big (society meetings, etc...): not personal, hard to meet people outside of your inner-sphere. But, large bandwidth.
  - Small (topic meetings, Gordon, FASEB, CSH, etc...). Usually attendance is selective. Excellent opportunity to meet people in your specialty.

- Find opportunities to meet key individuals
  - Social events hosted by the conference (i.e. Punting in Oxford Gordon conference).
  - Engaging people at community meal times or at poster sessions.

- Get introduced by someone you know!
USING EMAIL TO NETWORK
DO use e-mail to...

...ask questions about a published paper.
...ask if you might introduce yourself for a potential position.
...say thank you for a talk you heard, an idea that resonated.
Do what your momma said: be polite & respectful!

- Use the SUBJECT line to draw them in: flattery isn’t a bad thing.
- Introduce yourself so the recipient knows where you’re coming from. Why are you writing? This should be clear.
- Consider your language. Did you spell things correctly? Use appropriate grammar and punctuation?
- THANK the individual to whom you are writing. Make a response easy.
- Have all your contact information as part of your signature.

We advise against…

• Using the first name of ANYONE before you’ve met them, or they invite you to use their first name e.g. Dr., Professor, Mr., Mrs..

• Any form of a demand. You are REQUESTING help. Your recipient can choose not to give it.

• Verbosity. Say what you mean and MEAN what you say.
When you don’t know someone at all…

• Use the network you DO have to see if they can help with an introduction (e.g. cc’ing you on an e-mail between the two of them.)

• Considering asking whether you could contact them through e-mail further about an important matter. You MUST distinguish yourself so you are heard and they know you are for real.
Example email request:

Re: Meeting request with Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellow

Dear Dr. Who,

I’m a postdoctoral fellow in Cancer Biology at Vanderbilt University. I am in the process of exploring my next career steps and particularly interested in applying my background in cell proliferation and tumor initiation to develop precision chemotherapy for cancer patients. My advisor, Dr. What, suggested that you would have a very good perspective on the current field.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you briefly to learn more about your career path and current role at DiaTech Oncology. I’m especially interested in any advice you may have for someone who is interested in transitioning from academia to industry.

Would you have time to meet for a coffee at some point in the next month?

My best,

Ashley

615.123.1234
bradyae3656@gmail.com

*courtesy of Ashley Brady, Vanderbilt University
HOW DO YOU USE LINKEDIN TO NETWORK?
LinkedIn Dos (and Don’ts)

• Have a LinkedIn Account

• Keep it updated, at least when something changes

• Have a proper, professional-looking picture (NO selfies)
Your profile is set up! Now what?

1. Build Your Connections
   - Professional organizations, school connections, etc.

2. Build Your Reputation and Voice
   - Contribute to group conversations. Don’t always ask for help; offer your help and expertise too.

3. Build Your Network!
Building Your Network

- Start with your local connections
- Connect with those you’ve recently met
- Connect with those you don’t know
LinkedIn Should Not Be a Chore

- LinkedIn is the most efficient, effective, and professional network out there. And it’s free.
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS
Informational interviewing

• Informal meeting to ask someone about their job.

• NOT, “Ask someone for a job” (or connect you w/ hiring manager or forward your résumé)

• Gain insider’s perspective on a career path, industry.

• Learn about resources.

• Build confidence.

• Build your network!
Informational interviewing – what to ask?

• Tell me about your career path—how did you get here?
• What skills are most valuable to you in your job?
• What do you look for when you hire new people?
• I’m interested in “X” job because I enjoy “Y.” Do you know of other positions that might use similar skills?

*courtesy of Ashley Brady, Vanderbilt University*
Informational interviewing - what **not** to say

- *Do your homework: don’t ask what you can learn w/ Google.*
- “How much money do you make?”
- “I don’t have any practical experience.”
- “I’m tired of [research] [grant writing] [working 24-7].”
- “I want a job with [less stress] [more work-life balance].”
- “I’ll take any job that pays me.”
Informational interview etiquette

• Be polite, be grateful.

• Respect their time – limit the meeting to 15-30 minutes.

• If you suggest coffee or lunch, pay for both of you.

• Be on time, dress appropriately.

• Afterward, send a thank you note within 24 hours.
  • Email/personalized LinkedIn connection is fine
  • Handwritten is notable.

• **NEVER** ask for a job or for them to pass your resume on.
Use myIDP to track informational interviews

- Track who you meet with, and when
- Record what you learn
MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS YOU’VE MADE
Make Generous Networking a Habit

• Every time you encounter something interesting, think about how you can share it with someone else.
• Going to an event? See if someone wants to come with you.
• Share your movements and updates (not just on LinkedIn) with those in your orbit
• Every day, think about connecting what you are doing to someone in your network (or someone you want to connect with). Do so with the plan of being helpful to others.
Networking: Put It Into Practice

1. Grab some paper!

2. List five things in the next 48 hours to start or expand your network
Thank you for attending!

Questions?

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