Networking and Informational Interviews

What is Networking?

- Networking is the most effective job search strategy. It simply means to make meaningful connections that you stay in regular contact with (since you never know when opportunities will arise)
- Talk with people in the field of your choice and gather information in order to be aware of how to best market yourself to employers.
- You never know who can connect you to the person who can offer you a position! Networking can significantly increase your chances of finding a great opportunity.

Potential Networking Contacts

- Professional organizations
- Professional colleagues
- Community organizations
- Faculty, Career Coaches, UT Staff
- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Former classmates and co-workers
- Recruiters/professionals in the field

Find Recruiters on Handshake

1. Log into Handshake
2. Click on Jobs
3. Click on Employers
4. Type Company in Search
5. Click on interested companies and scroll down to find the Contact section on the right
6. Email the recruiters and connect with them on LinkedIn!

Research and Know What You're Interested in

Before you start networking, narrow down what fields you're interested in and have an idea for what skills you'd like to use. Ask yourself:

- What industries are you targeting?
- What positions interest you the most? What skills are needed?
- What are your specific career goals?
- What skills are you marketing to potential employers?

Networking Strategies

- Connect with professionals in the field of your interest through **LinkedIn** and other professional social networking sites.
- Attend networking events and meet new people at conferences.
- Actively participate in on-campus organizations and professional associations related to your field.
- Build relationships and gain relevant experience by volunteering with organizations that match your passions and career goals.
- Stay in touch with former supervisors/colleagues/classmates.

Sending Connection Invitations

Personalize the invitation by mentioning why you're connecting with them (find a commonality).

Example:
Hi (their name),
I noticed we are both in the (group name) group. It seems that we have similar interests. I'd like to connect so we can stay in touch!
Thanks, (Your name)

Use LinkedIn to Connect and Network

(http://www.leisurejobs.com/cheatsheet/ultimate-linkedin-cheat-sheet-A4.pdf)

- Connect with employers via LinkedIn and grow your professional brand by joining groups with keywords of your interest (i.e. Marketing/Accounting/Event Planning/Music/Nursing/Medicine/etc.) and follow companies you are interested.
- In your joined groups, start connecting with members and looking at the companies they work for. Click on those companies and follow them also if they are of interest.

Networking and Informational Interviews

What are Informational Interviews?

- Informational Interviewing allows you the ability to explore the field of your interest through a structured conversation with a professional in the field.
- You initiate the interview and prepare potential questions to ask.
- It's an opportunity to brainstorm with professionals about your career plans/interests. It is NOT a time to ask directly for a job or internship; rather use it for a learning and networking opportunity.

How to Set Up an Informational Interview:

- Connect with family, friends, neighbors, alumni, and professionals. E-mail or call them to set up a time to meet.
- Look up companies/employees on LinkedIn to connect with in order to set up an informational interview with them
- Send an e-mail (or a message on LinkedIn) to each contact requesting a brief informational interview, clearly indicating a few questions and that it is for information only and there is no job expectation.

What to Include in the Correspondence:

- A brief introduction about yourself, your interests, and why you're contacting them.
- Request their availability to meet (via Skype/phone/in-person) and give days/times that work for you (be flexible).

Before the Informational Interview:

- Prepare as if it were an actual job interview by conducting research on the company and the field.
- Bring a padfolio with a tailored resume in case they ask to view it. Towards the end if you're feeling comfortable, ask them to look over your resume for an industry specialists opinion.
- Prepare well-thought-out questions. These will demonstrate your interest in the other person, their work, and the career field. Questions can seek the advice or mentorship of the professional.

During the Informational Interview:

- 1st impressions count: Depending on your field of interest, dress business casual or business professional.
- Arrive early, make eye contact, have a firm handshake, and take notes!
- Clearly show your interest and knowledge in the field in order to create a favorable impression. This will help them remember you if/when a position becomes available or if they hear of a position in another company you'd like.
- Come prepared with open-ended questions and create good discussions, all while sticking to the agreed upon time.
- Don't waste their time – Don't ask for a job – Don't ask simple questions you could easily look up online.
- Most people don't have jobs to offer, BUT they have valuable information, advice, and contacts for you!

    <u>Sample Questions:</u>
    - What do you find is the most enjoyable part of working in this company?
    - Why and how did you join this organization/What brought you here?
    - What is your educational background?
    - What are your day to day responsibilities?
    - What other positions/classes helped you prepare for this job?
    - What are some challenges you're experiencing in the field or that you foresee occurring?
    - Is there anyone else you believe I should connect with?

After the Informational Interview:

- Evaluate the interview and review your notes. How can the information you gathered help you move forward?
- Follow-up on suggestions made, including readings, meetings, contacts.
- Send a follow-up 'thank you' letter/email indicating your appreciation for their time and information.