Making New Contacts: Networking Strategically

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Making New Contacts: Networking and Career Fairs

AAAS

- International nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing science, engineering, and innovation throughout the world
- Membership-based organization
- Publisher of Science
- Source for broad range of career advice and resources through ScienceCareers.org
ScienceCareers.org

• Job listings
• Career advice articles
• Graduate program information
• Meetings and event information
• GrantsNet
• Career Forum
Science Careers/AAAS Outreach Program

- Info for Ph.D., postdocs, and beyond on…
  - Career options
  - Professional development skills
  - Job search

- In a variety of settings…
  - Trade shows and conferences
  - Universities and colleges
Who’s in YOUR network?

How do you increase the size of your network?

Why do you care about your network?
Introduction

- Perceptions of networking
  - Negative connotations
  - People avoid networking
- Reality
  - Networking can be fun
  - Networking impacts your career
Introduction (cont’d)

- Define networking
- Conferences
  - Elevator pitches and handshakes
  - Meeting people and exchanging business cards
  - Following up with contacts
- Professional societies
- Informational interviews
- Social networking sites
- Career fairs
Networking as a Broad Term

- Different contexts
- Different strategies
- Different reasons
- Networking isn’t just about your professional contacts
“Connecting with others really just involves having a predetermined plan and carrying it out, whether you want to be a ninth-grade history teacher or start your own business.”

- Keith Ferrazzi, *Never Eat Alone*
Prepare to Network

- Reflect on how you can benefit from networking
- Research events and people
- Brainstorm questions
- Set goals
Networking and Manners

- People like to help
- Don’t directly ask for a job, admission to graduate school, etc.
- Be mindful of people’s time
- Be friendly and collegial
- Observe how other people interact
- Don’t take things personally
- “What’s in it for me?”
Networking at Conferences

- Plenty of networking opportunities
  - Breaks
  - Poster sessions
  - Other activities
- Think of reasons to talk to people
- Ask questions
- Name badges
- If you feel shy, use the buddy system
- Prepare your opening line
Meeting People

- Entering and exiting conversations
- Always have a free hand at receptions
- Practice:
  - Your handshake
  - Meeting people
  - Speaking
- Who else should I talk to?
Elevator Pitches

- Be prepared to introduce yourself to people
- What to include
- Having different versions
Business Cards

- Make sure you have some
- Carry them with you
- Don’t be shy about passing them out
- Make sure your cards are accessible
- Resumes
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Following Up With Contacts

- Make notes about new contacts
- Follow up with new contacts soon after you’ve met
- Keep up with people in your network
- “Will you look at my resume? Where can I build skills?”
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Professional Societies

- As a place for networking
- Annual meetings
- Local chapters, regional meetings
- Membership directories
- Volunteer opportunities
Informational Interviews

- Learn about career options and expand your network
- Ask for a few minutes of the person’s time
- Prepare ahead of time
- Briefly introducing yourself and explain your interest
- Ask open-ended questions
- Mind your manners
- Ask for referrals
- Afterwards, write a thank you note
Informational Interview Questions

- What attracted you to this field?
- What do you like most or least about this position or field?
- Describe a typical day or week.
- What steps did you take to break into this field?
- What skills and attributes are most helpful in your job?
- To what professional associations do you belong?
- What advice would you give somebody interested in pursuing your line of work?
Social Networking Websites

- Various websites – LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, science specific sites, also online forums
- A way to control your online presence
- Help with various aspects of networking
  - Meet people
  - Stay connected
  - Organize contacts
- AAAS’ and Science Careers Facebook pages, Science Careers Forum
- Blogging
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But…

- Be mindful about what you post and your privacy settings
- Don’t post anything you wouldn’t want an employer to read
Career Fairs

- As a form of networking
- Do your research
- Make a plan
- Prepare your elevator pitch and questions
- Bring resumes/business cards
- Dress appropriately
More about Career Fairs

- Practice with lower priority employers
- Be mindful of recruiters time
- Handshakes and eye contact
- Follow up!
So… We’ve talked about:

- Places to build our professional networks
- Skills to use
- Techniques to use
Remember…

- Networking doesn’t have to be hard or scary
- Practice makes it easier
- It’s okay to make mistakes
- Over time your network will grow and you’ll become better connected … and find a job!