



QUINEBAUG VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Quick Guide to Effective Networking

- **What is it?** Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting. Networking often begins with a single point of common ground. It takes time to build authentic professional relationships, the kind that will really stick by your side and help you succeed – just as it takes time to build true friendships. Start as early as possible, and you will set yourself up for success.

General Tips:

- **Reach out to Professors** - Your professors have been studying your industry for years, possibly decades. Many of them are well-respected experts. Be active in their classrooms so they will remember you, and take advantage of any one-on-one consultations they offer.
- **Use your Career Services Office** – Career Services is important at every college and university, and they can help you improve your resume, polish your LinkedIn profile, practice your interviewing skills, and much more. They can connect you with available internships and jobs and also connect you with former students who are now working in your industry and have connections of their own.
- **Talk to Graduates/Alumni** - No one knows better what it is like to enter the market these days than recent graduates. People who have graduated in the past couple of years will usually be open to connect with you. But make an effort to talk to other graduates from your university too, those who are now more established in their careers.
- **Join College Networking Groups** - These could be wonderful places to connect with graduates, but also with people who are still students in your major or a similar one. Remember that in a few years, these could be your colleagues, and might even be in a position to hire you.
- **Talk to Relatives and Friends' Relatives** – Is there anyone in your family who is working in your industry? How about your friends' relatives? Tell everyone in your personal network that you are looking to build connections in the industry, and that you would love an introduction.
- **Get a Part-Time Job that is related to your Major or Area of Interest** - Get a part time job in a position that is related to your major, or in a company whose name could impress people in your industry. Use the time you have in the company to make a great impression and to connect with colleagues.
- **Get an Internship** - Many companies offer internships to students and recent graduates, which lets you learn a lot about the industry from the inside, and sometimes lets you work directly with industry leaders. The pay is often low or nonexistent, but if you can afford it, it is worth it to take on an internship for a few months to learn new skills and develop new connections.
- **Volunteer** - Nonprofits everywhere are looking for additional working hands that are willing to donate their expertise. If you are stuck in the “can’t get a job without experience, but can’t get experience without a job” phase, consider donating the skills you learned in college. Choose your nonprofits carefully – having respected ones in your portfolio can help open doors for you. Do an excellent job for

these nonprofits, and their managers will probably be happy to connect you with their network when the chance comes up.

- **Be Active on Social Media, Especially LinkedIn** - Join Facebook groups and Twitter chats that are popular in your industry. Follow relevant hashtags on Instagram. Participate in conversations. Ask questions. Add your own insights. Before you know it, people in the industry will start knowing who you are. Put in extra efforts on **LinkedIn**, which is the #1 professional network, with membership approaching 1 billion around the globe! People join it specifically to build professional relationships, advance their careers and grow their businesses. In many industries, this is the best place to join group discussions and invite other professionals to connect with you.
- **Attend Industry Events** - Make an effort to meet professionals from your industry in-person whenever possible. Conferences are a wonderful way to do that, and you can sometimes get a job or volunteer at a conference in order to get a free or discounted ticket. **Meetup.com** is another great solution if you are looking for free industry events.
- **Ask for Informational Interviews** - Informational interviews are opportunities to learn more about your industry from successful people. You will not be interviewed for a job – you will be interviewing others on what it takes to get their type of job, and what that job looks like from the inside. Remember that successful people often get asked to do informational interviews, so it is always best to build relationships first using the tips shared here. Then, a one-on-one phone call, Zoom call, or in person interview will deepen your connection even more.
- **Find a Career Mentor** - Career mentors can help guide which types of jobs you should take to get to where you want to go. If you network authentically using the tips above, it might take some time, but chances are that you will end up finding career mentors who will be happy to guide you and introduce you to their networks.

Final Reminders:

- Networking can be uncomfortable at first, but gets easier and easier over time. It is an important skill to develop for future career development and success.
- Finding common ground or interests with others often serves as the initial “icebreaker,” which opens the door for further conversations and relationship development.
- Always bring a positive attitude to networking efforts! It is a great opportunity to meet new people, and live a richer, fuller life.