

NETWORKING

Networking is the process of developing and maintaining relationships with people who can provide you with information, advice, and referrals. As part of your job search, networking can help you:

- Increase your visibility in the professional world and market your skills and abilities to contacts within your field of interest.
- Tap into the unseen job market—the 80 - 85% of jobs that are never advertised but are filled by referrals through existing employees or industry contacts.
- Stay up to date with current industry trends and changes in the job market and get a firsthand view into occupations and companies you want to learn about.

Preparation

Begin by making a list of people you know who might have information to help in your search. Potential networking contacts include:

- Relatives
- Friends (especially those who have had internships at companies of interest to you)
- Parents' friends and friends' parents
- Faculty and academic advisors
- Former employers and co-workers
- Neighbors and acquaintances
- Alumni

Reaching out to a Potential Networking Contact

A phone call is the best way to reach out to a potential contact, as emails can easily get lost. If you have a phone number for a networking contact, call to intro-

duce yourself and ask for an informational meeting. Below is an example of an introductory phone call:

Contact: "Hello, this is Sally Smith."

Student: "Good morning, Ms. Smith. My name is Mike Jones. I received your name from John Green, who is neighbor of mine. I'm a junior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and John suggested I reach out to you."

Contact: "Oh, yes. John mentioned you might call. What can I do for you, Mike?"

Student: "I know your schedule is busy so I will not take much of your time. I am pursuing a career in civil engineering and John mentioned that you're currently working as a Project Engineer at XX Company. It sounds like you've had a lot of great experience in the civil engineering field, and if possible I would like to arrange a time for an informational interview with you. My schedule is very flexible and I'm looking for only 20-30 minutes of your time."

Contact: “Sure, I’d be happy to talk with you. My schedule is pretty full this week, but I have some time next Tuesday morning from 9-11 or Wednesday afternoon from 1-3. Does either of those times work well with you?”

Student: “Yes, next Tuesday at 10 AM works great. Shall I just call you directly at that time?”

Contact: “That would be great. I’ll talk to you next Tuesday at 10 AM.”

Student: “Thank you so much, Ms. Smith. I’m looking forward to it. Have a great day!”

Reaching Out by Email

If you do not have a phone number, email is the next best option. Below is a sample structure to help you draft an initial email asking for an informational discussion:

Good morning, my name is _____,

I am a senior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and am graduating in May with a bachelor’s of science in _____ (field), and I’d love to find out more about working in _____ (industry, type of role, etc).

You have a broad background in _____ (that industry, role , etc), and I’d love to talk with you about _____ (companies that would value my skills, strategies for getting into this industry, role, etc). Would you be willing to talk with me (or meet for coffee if the contact is local) sometime over the next week or two? When would be a convenient date and time for you?

Preparing for the meeting

Do your research and prepare ahead of time before the networking discussion. Determine the objectives of the discussion, research the company and person, and prepare an agenda with questions to ask. Your questions should be thoughtful and specific, such as:

- Are there any industries, sectors, or roles that you think would best match my skill set? How do you recommend I position myself?
- What do you think are the most effective techniques for obtaining work in this field?
- What are the necessary skills and abilities for someone in this field, role, etc.?
- What do you like or dislike about your company?
- How did you get into this field?
- What do you like or dislike about the work that you do?
- What is the current demand for people in this field?
- Given your understanding of my skills and background, what barriers would I have to overcome to make a move into this field, industry, role, etc.?
- Are there particular companies or employers that might be good targets for me?
- Now that you understand my background and career goals, do you have any additional suggestions or advice for me?

Conducting the Meeting

Begin the meeting by thanking the contact for taking the time to speak with you. Set the tone and clarify your purpose by stating your career goals and what you hope to gain from the discussion. Use your prepared questions to help drive the conversation.

Always be mindful of the time—if you find that you are exceeding the time agreed upon, check with the contact to ensure they are able to continue the discussion.

Close by thanking the contact again and discussing any next steps, if applicable. Ask if there is anyone else who they recommend you talk to. This is a great way to expand your network.

Follow Up

Send a thank you note or email to the contact within two days of a discussion. Also check in with them from time to time to provide updates on your job progress, highlighting how they have helped, and to ask about any potential new opportunities they know about.

A Few Final Tips

- Set networking goals. Know who you want to meet and what you want to find out from them.
- Build networking into your schedule. For example, set aside two hours per week to identify new contacts and follow-up with existing contacts.
- Don't get discouraged—be persistent, and remember that most opportunities are found through networking.
- Make developing a friendship with a contact your primary goal, instead of just focusing on getting a job.

- Join professional organizations to meet people in the industry you would like to enter.
- For more information, check out some of the networking books available in the CDC Career Resource Library, including:
 - *The Networking Survival Guide*, by Diane C. Darling
 - *Vault Guide to Schmoozing*, by Marcy Lerner, Ed Shen, Mark Oldman, Hussam Hamadeh, and Samer Hamadeh

Using LinkedIn to Enhance your Networking Strategy

LinkedIn is a professional networking tool. It allows you to create and build your online presence to better market yourself to potential employers and networking contacts. Be sure to post only professional facts on LinkedIn and avoid personal items.

Your LinkedIn Profile

Make sure you have a complete and detailed LinkedIn profile. Recruiters use LinkedIn to identify potential job candidates and will compare profiles with job specifications. Always provide up-to-date, accurate information that helps you to stand out, including:

- **Contact Settings:** Post your email address. Review your public profile settings to ensure that you understand who can see what. Customize your public profile URL with your name.
- **Summary:** Write a brief paragraph outlining who you are and what key skills you have. For example, "Worcester Polytechnic Institute student graduating in May 2013 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering with a concentration in construction project management. I am able to effectively adhere to project deadlines and manage multiple streams of work."

- **Projects:** Use this section to highlight the projects on your resume, including:
 - Great Problems Seminar
 - Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP)
 - Class projects and labs
 - Major Qualifying Project (MQP)
- **Experience:** List key jobs and leadership and volunteer experiences. You can pull this information directly from your resume.
- **Skills & Expertise:** Add professional skills. This information should align with the Skills section of your resume. You can also add soft skills (ex., Communication or Project Management) and expertise within your major (Civil Engineering or Bioinformatics). Your contacts can choose to endorse one or many of your skills, which is visible on your profile.
- **Education:** Add Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the degree you are working towards.
- **Additional Information:** This section is optional. You can add interests or advice on how to best contact you. Focus on skills and experience—your profile should function as an online resume and should not include a lot of personal information.

Remember to update your profile regularly to keep your contacts informed of how you are doing.

Recommendations

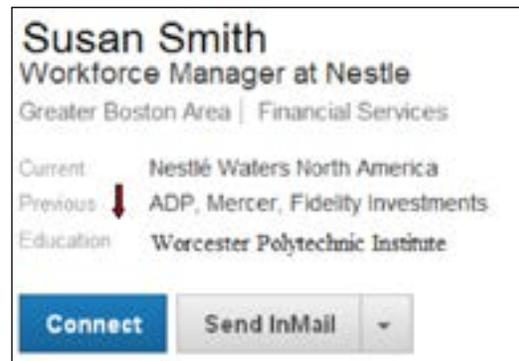
Recommendations are like references, and they matter to recruiters who are looking at you as a potential candidate. Try to get a few recommendations from people you have worked for or with in a job, project setting, or volunteer experience. You should also recommend others, as this is a great way to support your peers and get noticed by recruiters. When recruiters view your

peers' profiles, they can also see your recommendation and profile.

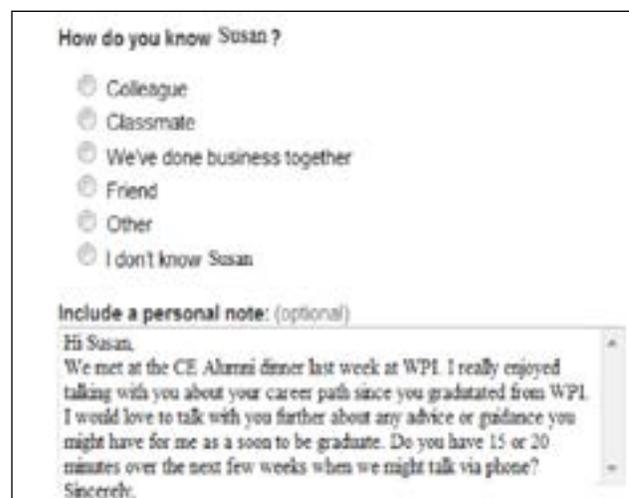
Connections

The more connections you have, the more searchable you become, so add as many connections as you can. Try to get a minimum of 100 connections including colleagues, former co-workers, peers, and friends. Connect with your peers during class to ensure that your connections are relevant and timely.

Once you find someone who you want to connect with, click "Connect" under their name.



When adding connections, write a brief personal note asking to connect. Always personalize your connection requests.



Advanced People Search

You can use the Advanced People Search to find WPI alumni in a company, industry, or role that interests you. Simply click “Advanced” next to the search bar at the top of the page. If you identify a good contact, you might consider reaching out to ask for an informational meeting.



Groups

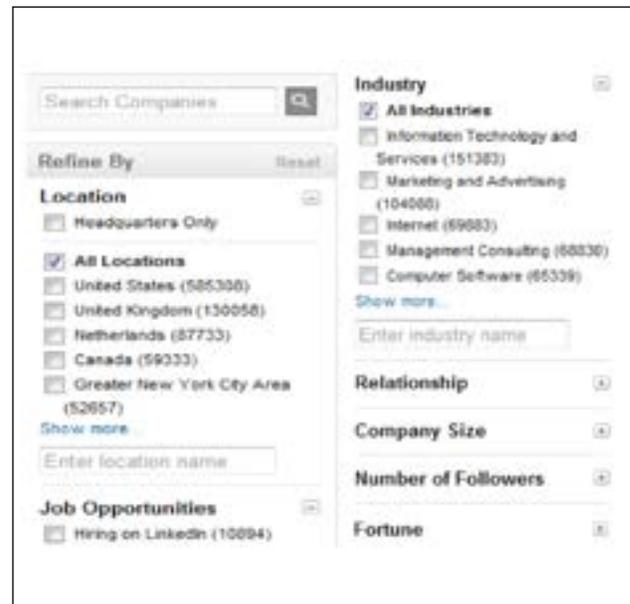
Join groups that align with your areas of interest. These groups might include any of the following:

- Professional Associations
- Alumni
- Major
- Industry of Interest
- Sports
- Fraternity / Sorority
- Volunteer Interests
- WPI Career Development Center (Join the CDC group to receive timely updates regarding CDC and Employer events and articles, as well as advice on job search and LinkedIn topics.)

Once you join a group you can follow career discussions, post questions, and review job postings.

Companies

Click “Companies” under the “Careers” heading. Use the “Search Companies” tab to network into a company you are interested in. See if you are connected to anyone at that company (1st or 2nd degree), and reach out and ask for an informational meeting to learn more about the company and available opportunities.



Jobs

Click on “Jobs” under the “Careers” heading. Use “Advanced Search” to focus your search results on the type of job you are looking for within specific industries or locations.

When you see a job of interest, check to see if you are connected to any current employees (1st or 2nd degree). Reach out and ask for an informational meeting to learn more.

Remember...

- LinkedIn can be a powerful networking tool that enables you to find a person you’d like to connect with, send a connection request and introduce yourself, and request an informational meeting.
- Check in with your contacts from time to time to maintain your relationships. Provide updates on your job progress, and highlight how they have helped.
- Stop at the CDC to learn more about LinkedIn. You can talk with a Career Counselor or attend one of our LinkedIn Labs.

Career Development Center
 Project Center
 508-831-5260 | cdc@wpi.edu
wpi.edu/+cdc



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