

Quick Tip Sheet

Networking

Introduction to Networking

Networking sounds scary but it is one of the most effective career development tools that you can use throughout your professional life. Even if you are not a natural networker, networking is an important skill that can easily be learned and refined as you grow in your career. Think about it as creating and maintaining a professional community.

Use networking as a means to:

- Explore career opportunities
- Learn more about a major, industry or company
- Gather advice from different perspectives
- Tap into the hidden job market (jobs that aren't posted and advertised on HR or recruiting websites)

Developing and maintaining strong connections will not only serve you well and help you along your career path, but over time, will allow you to assist others along their path. The following information and activity will introduce you to the concept of networking and get you started on identifying and developing your network.

Networking Is:	Networking Is Not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting and getting to know people who are willing to share with you career information and advice ● Building ongoing relationships to exchange information and advice ● Following up and maintaining contact with those who have assisted you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Asking for a job ● Collecting business cards ● Randomly passing out resumes ● Using people for information you think they have

Types of Networking

Informal Networking: takes place all the time in places like the grocery store line, on the bus, at a social gathering or anywhere you interact with other people. It is informal because there is no explicit purpose or agenda involved. This type of networking is very powerful. Examples of informal networks include:

- Family
- Friends
- High school teachers and counselors
- Peers in your courses

- Athletic teams
- Student groups/organizations
- Religious groups/affiliations
- Current employers
- University faculty and staff
- Waiting in line at a store

Formal Networking: happens when you attend a networking or industry-specific event or schedule a time for the explicit purpose of letting someone in your network know that you are looking for professional development opportunities. It's formal because you have stated an explicit purpose for the interaction, and everyone knows that purpose. Examples of formal networking include:

- Professional Associations
- Career Fairs
- Networking events
- Alumni Events
- Conferences
- LinkedIn.com

If you have not connected with any formal networks yet, two great places to start are with professional associations and career fairs, which you can access here at URI!

A professional association is usually a nonprofit organization seeking to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest. Professional associations usually have a fee, but often give students a discounted rate or have student chapters. Also, check with your department to see if there are any professional associations that the university is already affiliated with in your industry.

A career fair is a great place to gather information about potential employers and make contacts that can lead to employment. Go to www.uri.edu/career/events to find out about URI's career fairs.

Staying Connected

Building and maintaining your professional network has become easier than ever! Below are a few tools and suggestions to stay connected to your network:

- LinkedIn: LinkedIn also provides other features including the ability to set up and join groups, and a jobs section where members can advertise open positions or apply for jobs. (LinkedIn.com)
- Twitter: a great source of information for what is trending in your industry, upcoming events, positions that are opening, and content from thought leaders in your field. You can also join conversations about an industry topic that interests you. (Twitter.com)
- Instagram: like Twitter, Instagram provides a venue to follow well-known individuals, organizations, companies and groups in your industry. This is another great way to learn about upcoming trends and events. (Instagram.com)
- E-mail, a phone conversation, or an in-person meeting are other great ways to stay connected to your network. Sometimes just a quick phone call to say "hi", an email update, or stopping by to have coffee can help show that you have a genuine interest in your connection.

Developing Your Networking Plan

Strategic networking is a planned and ongoing effort. You set goals, develop strategies for achieving them, take action, evaluate how well your plan is working, and make changes as necessary. It is something that you do throughout your career. By answering the following questions, you will begin to set your goals and start to develop your professional networking plan.

1. What career do I hope to have after I graduate?

2. How can I use networking to learn more about my future career?

Refer to the **Introduction to Networking**.

3. Who is currently in my network?

Refer to **Types of Networking**.

4. Given my career goals, what kinds of people/professionals should I add to my network?

5. What activities can I do, or tools can I use, to strategically grow my network and connect with new professionals?

Refer to **Types of Networking**.

Complete the chart on the next page to develop your next steps.

1. Identifying your Current Network: List people who are currently in your network who could potentially help you in your professional development. Then connect!
2. Join professional associations: Research professional associations and student groups related to your field and find out the requirements for joining those groups. Reach out to these groups!
3. Attend Networking Events: Are there upcoming events that can help you meet new professionals in your field and help learn about the latest trends? Add them to your calendar!

Part 1: Identifying your current network

Connect!

Contact Name	Organization	Contact Method	Connections/ Referrals	Reason for Contact	Follow-Up 1	Follow-Up 2
Example: Andre Williams	University of Rhode Island	E-mail: awilliams@gmail.com	Career Education Specialist	Learn about internship opportunities at URI	9/22/2025	
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

Part 2: Join Professional Associations

Reach out to these groups!

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS/ORGANIZATIONS
1.
2.

Part 3: Attend Networking Events

Add these events to your calendar!

NETWORKING EVENTS	DATE	LOCATION
1.		
2.		