

Networking

People hire people they know, which is why it's important to always be meeting new people and growing your professional network of contacts.

When networking...

- ✓ Be respectful and convey gratitude
- ✓ Dress professionally
- ✓ Be proactive with introductions
- ✓ Be a good listener
- ✓ Maintain eye contact and smile
- ✓ Follow up with connections you made

Introductions: Develop an introduction that fits *you* as the unique personality that you are and really shows the employer how you can be a valuable member to their team. Always smile when introducing yourself and thank people for answering your questions.

Sample introductions:

"Hi, my name is _____. I am studying _____ and would like to work in _____ when I finish school. Can you tell me about your experience in that field?"

"Hello, my name is _____. I have experience working as a _____ and _____. I am currently studying _____ at NIC and am very interested in your company. I read on your website that your company does _____. Can you tell me more about that?"

Sample questions to consider asking:

- What do you do at _____? How long have you been in this industry?
- How did you get into this work? What do you like best about your current position?
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- What are some of the regular duties and responsibilities of your job?
- How do you motivate yourself to do the tasks you don't enjoy?
- What do you find the most challenging with your work? What are the biggest challenges facing your company or in your industry today?
- Are there any emerging trends that you see developing? How is your industry changing?
- What experience/education led you to your present position?
- Do you have any advice for students who are starting their careers in this field?
- What are the top skills to develop for success in this field?
- What kinds of experiences do you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?

- Do you have any advice for students interested in this field or position?
- What characteristics make people stand out in your workplace?
- What is the most important thing that a student preparing to enter this field should know?
- Do you hire co-op or internship students? What skills are you looking for in student hires?
- Do we need to have relevant work experience, or do you hire students without any work experience? What kind of training program do you offer for new employees?
- Can I please have your business card?

**You certainly don't need to ask any of these questions and you don't want to ask ALL of them either but it is a good idea to choose a few favorites and you can use them when speaking to any new people in a professional situation like a networking event.*

Tips to consider for Networking (in person):

BEFORE: Preparation beforehand will help you be more confident at the event

- Research the employers/people you're going to meet and use those insights to create a list of intelligent, relevant questions to ask. This will help you identify things you have in common and ask questions that will give you the information you need to make an informed decision about whether or not you want to apply there in the future.
- Networking is about sharing: Giving and receiving. Before you start networking, think of the value you can offer your network and determine what you have to offer.
- Dress for success! Wear clothes that are neat, clean, and professional.
- Practice introducing yourself so it will be easier and more comfortable at the event.

DURING: Be genuinely interested, ask questions and listen

- Pleasantly introduce yourself and don't forget to smile 😊
- Your genuine curiosity can spark wonderful connections. When you ask thoughtful questions and actively listen to others, you're creating a bond that's more than a transaction. Just be yourself and enjoy the conversation.
- Ask employers for their contact information (eg. their business card) so that you have a means to stay in touch after the event.

AFTER: Follow-up and follow through

- Building meaningful professional relationships takes time and, in most cases, the first meeting is only an introduction. The value you can leverage from your connections often depends on how much time and effort you invest in cultivating and maintaining them.
- Follow-up with employers to reinforce the connections you made. Take advantage of seasonal changes/holidays to get in touch such as Thanksgiving, New Year's, etc.