



University of Phoenix®

Professional Networking Guide

Five steps to effectively build your network

Professional networking helps you proactively grow and maintain relationships that can enhance your career goals. Whether you're looking for advice, information or job leads, it's important to cultivate a network of valuable connections to support you on your career journey.

In this guide...

YOU'LL LEARN FIVE STEPS FOR BUILDING YOUR NETWORK

- 1 Establish your goals**
- 2 Target your audience**
- 3 Tap into connections**
- 4 Expand your reach**
- 5 Maintain relationships**



1 Establish your goals

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING TO GET OUT OF NETWORKING?

Before you dive into expanding your network, take a moment to reflect on what you hope to accomplish by forming more professional relationships.



Some common goals for networking include:

- Elevating your knowledge of a specific industry, company or role
- Getting referred to job opportunities
- Finding mentors who can provide encouragement and advice
- Learning about entry points into your desired field
- Uncovering “hidden” or unadvertised job openings

Besides helping you achieve your own goals, building a professional network should empower you to help others achieve theirs too. Networking is a two-way street of fostering meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships that can withstand the full length of your career journey.



2 Target your audience

HOW TO MAKE STRATEGIC AND EFFECTIVE CONNECTIONS

Your target audience is the specific group of people who can best support your career goals. To identify who those people are, focus on locations, industries, companies and job titles most relevant to your professional interests.



To narrow the search for your target audience, consider:

- Where do you want to work?
- What industries interest you?
- What companies do you want to learn more about?
- What job function are you pursuing (e.g., HR, social work, accounting, etc.)?
- What job titles interest you the most?

Once you've outlined the parameters of your target audience, you'll need to state your career interests in a clear and actionable way. This tells your network what you're hoping to achieve and can help them point you in the direction of other professionals for you to connect with.



Here's an example of a clear and an unclear career interest statement:

UNCLEAR STATEMENT

"I'm looking for a job with a company that pays well and offers good benefits."

CLEAR STATEMENT

"I'm interested in entry-level marketing roles, possibly for software companies or healthcare organizations in Phoenix, AZ."

3 Tap into connections

HOW TO ACTIVATE YOUR EXISTING NETWORK

A good place to start building your network is by tapping into the connections you already have. Your current network is bigger than you might think! Here's how you can activate the people you already know to start expanding your network:



First, create a list of your close contacts and acquaintances.

These can be friends, family or people you know from social interactions like the gym, volunteering events, sports, etc.

Highlight the people in the parameters of your target audience or who can introduce you to someone who is.



Then, reach out to your close contacts to start generating leads for informational interviews.

Remember, an informational interview isn't a job interview, it's just a conversation with someone to gather more information related to your career interests.



Next, reach out to your acquaintances.

Focus on strengthening your connection since these are people you don't know as well.

Don't be afraid to reach out to people you haven't spoken to in a while. If one of your close contacts introduces you to an acquaintance, follow up immediately and request a time to meet.



Lastly, send a thank-you note to every person who responded to your request for help.

Try to reach out within two weeks from their original response.



TIP

If you're not sure what to ask in an informational interview, you can view some sample questions [here](#).

4 Expand your reach

TECHNIQUES FOR MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS

Expanding your network helps you cultivate relationships with people outside of your existing social circles. Here are a few ways to make new connections and expand your reach:



Grow your network on LinkedIn

Once you've **created your LinkedIn account** you can start connecting with people who share similar interests and backgrounds as you. Start by connecting with alumni in your target audience by sending an invitation to connect with a short message asking for an informational interview. You can also request to join relevant LinkedIn groups and meet more people in your target audience from there.



Join professional associations

Professional associations are hubs for information on industry trends, professional development opportunities and networking events. Do some research on associations that align with your career goals and see if there's a local (or virtual) chapter in your area. If you're not sure where to start, **click here**.



Participate in networking groups or events

Research specific groups and events that focus on your professional interests or get involved in volunteer opportunities like serving on nonprofit boards to gain leadership skills and make new connections. Websites like **Meetup**, **Eventbrite**, **Catchafire** and **VolunteerMatch** are a great place to start.



TIP

To quickly find a list of University of Phoenix alumni to connect with on LinkedIn, **click here**.

5 Maintain relationships

CREATING CONNECTIONS THAT LAST

As you continue to grow your network, it's important to foster and maintain your new professional relationships. Here are some strategies for following up and staying in touch:



Send a thank-you note

After an informational interview, make sure to send a thank-you note within 24-48 hours. If the meeting went well, try to get their commitment to a future meeting. Make sure to also get their contact info and connect on LinkedIn.



Add value

After you've said thank you, do something that adds value to the relationship, such as:

- Writing an unsolicited LinkedIn recommendation
- Liking, sharing or commenting on their LinkedIn posts
- Taking them out to lunch, coffee or drinks



Send updates

Letting your network know how they've helped you is a great way to stay connected. This will help strengthen your relationship, validate their efforts, and contribute to the long-term maintenance of your connections.

Still need help?

OUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO CAREER SERVICES FOR LIFE™

At University of Phoenix, our commitment to you doesn't end at graduation. Whether you're actively pursuing a degree with us or graduated long ago, you'll have access to career advisors and resources – from your first class to your last job.

You'll get access to personal career coaching, including job search planning, resumé fine-tuning, interview prepping and more. See all of your options at phoenix.edu/career-services.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Here are a few sample questions you could ask in an informational interview:

- Why did this work interest you, and how did you get started?
- What's it like working for [company]?
- What are some pros and cons of being in this industry?
- What do you wish you knew about this industry before you started?
- What current issues and trends are you seeing in this field?
- What specific skills and personal qualities are most essential to be effective in your job?
- How would you describe the work culture at your organization?
- What are some challenges or frustrations you're currently facing both as an organization and in your role?
- Aside from schooling, how did you prepare for this work?
- Would you recommend any additional training for new professionals?
- Are there other people you suggest I contact?
Can I use your name in contacting them?
- Are there any organizations in the area you think would be a good fit for me given my interests in XYZ?

RESOURCES

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Click to view any of the below professional associations to help build your network. Feel free to do your own research on associations specific to your interests or unique to your area.

Business

[American Institute of Certified Public Accountants](#)
[Financial Planning Association](#)
[American Marketing Association](#)
[Society for Human Resource Management](#)
[Project Management Institute](#)
[American Management Association](#)

Healthcare

[American College of Healthcare Executives \(ACHE\)](#)
[Association of University Programs in Health Administration](#)
[National Center for Healthcare Leadership](#)
[Health Information Management System Society \(HIMSS\)](#)
[National Healthcareer Association](#)
[American Public Health Association](#)
[Society for Public Health Education](#)

Counseling / Social Work

[American Counseling Association](#)
[American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy](#)
[National Association of Social Workers](#)

Criminal Justice & Security

[National Association of Chiefs of Police](#)
[National Criminal Justice Association](#)
[ASIS International](#)

Information Technology

[Association for Computing Machinery](#)
[Computing Technology Industry Association](#)
[International Council of E-Commerce Consultants](#)
[Information Systems Security Association](#)
[Information Systems Security Certification Consortium](#)
[Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers \(IEEE\)](#)

Nursing

[American Nurses Association](#)
[American Association of Nurse Practitioners](#)