



# 123'S OF NETWORKING

UGA Career Center Clark Howell Hall 542-3375 [www.uga.edu/career](http://www.uga.edu/career)

## 1st Step – Know yourself

Knowing yourself better will enable you to talk easily and with greater confidence to your contacts. It will also help you to make a match with careers and employers that are right for you. To facilitate this self-assessment, consider your skills, interests, personality type, and values. It may be appropriate to schedule a meeting with your Career Consultant or maybe you can take a few minutes to reflect on these questions:

- ❖ What are your greatest accomplishments?
- ❖ What enabled you to achieve these?
- ❖ What are common threads of interest?
- ❖ What are frequent themes regarding skills?
- ❖ What work or activities do you enjoy?
- ❖ What interests you professionally/personally?
- ❖ What do you dislike doing?
- ❖ What is important to you?

## 2nd Step – Decide your purpose in contacting your network.

Deciding your purpose will largely depend on the stage you are in with regard to career planning. For example, if you are in the early stages and you are exploring majors or career directions, then your purpose is to gather information about jobs and careers of interest to you. This will include information about job duties, preparation, future growth, and recommended work experience. If you are in the later stages and conducting a job search for full-time positions, then your purpose is to obtain advice on how to conduct your job search and to get job leads. This will include specific information about employers, descriptions of various work environments, hiring strategies, preferred qualifications, and referrals to employers who have openings. These purposes are not exclusive and you may be seeking both information *and* advice on your job search from your contacts, especially if you are looking for your first experience in the field as an intern.

## 3rd Step – Develop a list of potential contacts.

According to Katherine Hansen in her book, *A Foot in the Door*, the following contacts are the best:

- ❖ Your classmates
- ❖ UGA Alumni, especially recent grads
- ❖ Parents & other family members
- ❖ Parents of classmates
- ❖ Professors and other advisors
- ❖ Current and former employers
- ❖ Guest speakers and Career Fair Reps.
- ❖ Members of professional associations
- ❖ Members of clubs or other organizations to which you belong
- ❖ Internet on-line discussion groups, chat rooms, and web-based networks
- ❖ Other targeted contacts such as high school teachers, family doctors, your clergy, etc.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Step – Practice Your Technique or Your Introductions**

Depending on the situation, you may want to use the *sound bite*, an idea by Brian Krueger in *The College Grad Hunter*, or a longer introduction called the *commercial*. The sound bite is an abbreviated introduction of yourself and is used in situations such as Career Fairs or receptions where you do not have much time to talk. It is also a good lead-in for telephone conversations with contacts you do not know. In situations in which you have more time to talk about yourself, the *commercial* is a longer version of the sound bite, typically thirty to sixty seconds. It works well during a meeting with one of your networking contacts. The commercial can also follow your *sound bite* as your contact asks you to elaborate on your background.

The *sound bite* consists of an introduction of yourself by name and university, what your major is, and what the purpose of your networking is. For example, “Hi, my name is Jimmy Joe. I’m a psychology major at The University of Georgia and I’m interested in learning about the human resources field.”

A *commercial* for Jimmy Joe could go something like this: “I became interested in the human resource field last summer when I interned at The Greater Atlanta YMCA. Although I had planned on following the traditional route to graduate school, I met the Human Resources Director, and found her job fascinating. The Director worked in all aspects of employee relations and had a sincere interest in helping people. I liked the variety of her job and the fact that she was a very positive influence in the YMCA. When I returned to school this fall, I decided to add a business communications class and I also joined the Management Society at UGA. I’ve enjoyed my business communication class and found it to be a good complement to psychology. Next semester I will take Psychology of the Workplace as well as Social Psychology. What is more, I hope to obtain an internship in human resources next summer.”

#### **PUTTING YOUR NETWORK INTO PRACTICE**

Now that you have developed your list of networking contacts, decided on your networking purpose, reflected on your interests and skills, and condensed these into a sound bite and commercial, it’s time to put all of your preparation into practice by initiating contact with your network. All of the following methods can be effective strategies, so remember to use a style that is comfortable for you.

**Person-to-Person** – According to Hansen, networking in person usually happens in the early, as well as the later stages of the networking process. In the early stage, you talk to people who are family members, friends, professors, or other close contacts. When these initial contacts lead to later meetings with the people whom your first contacts referred you to, the second stage of person-to-person networking occurs. Make sure to have your sound bite and commercial introductions ready, and always prepare a list of questions to ask your networking contact.

**Written Letters** – When you have been referred to someone you do not know or you are contacting someone without the benefit of an acquaintance’s referral (usually called a “cold call”), then a well-written letter is a good idea. In writing your letters, follow these guidelines:

**Opening Paragraph** – State why you are writing and identify yourself. Always lead with the name of the person that referred you. For example, “Mark Davis suggested that I write to you about my interest in working for a nonprofit agency. Currently, I am a junior psychology major at The University of Georgia and I am seeking information about careers in nonprofit.”

**Middle Paragraph** – Provide information about your background and your career interests, no matter tentative. For example, what work experience have you had and what are your goals.

Remember, the purpose of networking is to gather information, not to ask for a job. Therefore, make sure to state that you are in the process of gathering information about career possibilities. Also ask about the possibility of arranging a face-to-face meeting or a conversation by telephone or e-mail at the contact's convenience.

**Last Paragraph** – Thank your networking contact for their time and consideration. Do not ask them to call you. Instead, offer to call them after they have had an opportunity to review your letter, usually within one week, to schedule a convenient time for follow up.

**Telephone Calls** – An alternative to writing your networking contacts is to call them. As with the letter, always clearly identify yourself, the reason why you are calling, and give the name of your referral, if you have one. Have your sound bite ready, suggest a follow-up conversation by phone, face-to-face, or by e-mail, and close by thanking them for their time.

**E-Mail** – Communicating by e-mail is becoming the easiest way to contact busy professionals and it averts the waste of time caused by “telephone tag.” It's also a good strategy if you are familiar with your networking contacts and you know that their organization's culture is e-mail friendly. Just because e-mailing is easier, do not be misled and send a message that is overly casual. Follow the same guidelines for writing letter outlined above.