

# CAREER CORNER

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## Networking, networking, networking

**“It’s not always *what you know*, it’s *who you know*”.** We’ve all heard it. It’s one of those little reminders that is reiterated constantly because it can make a big impact in your career planning process. Whether you are a freshman student wanting to explore majors, a sophomore or junior hoping to learn about career options, or a senior beginning your full-time job search, networking can sometimes be the most important aspect of getting your foot in the door. Networking is building relationships with other people who may be excellent sources of information about a few topics or who may become some of your most valued mentors. What you get out of each networking opportunity is based solely on what you put in. If you’ve never considered yourself an adept ‘networker,’ there are plenty of tips that can help you get started.

In this issue of Career Corner, you’ll find information on how to network appropriately, an excellent avenue of networking that you may not be aware of, and guidance on how to conduct an informational interview to get the most out of your networking endeavors.

### Connecting with LVC Alumni

An excellent source of networking is through the alumni of Lebanon Valley College. This is a group of people who have been exactly where you are and are now able to offer a perspective of the working world after graduating from college. To help facilitate such connections, Career Services is partnered with Alumni Programs to offer an online mentoring database of volunteer contacts. This service, called *Career Connections* is available to all students through JOB CENTER and can be an excellent starting point to building a professional network.

#### **Who are the mentors?**

Currently we have over 400 mentors from all different industries and careers in a database that is continually growing. Mentors fill out personal profiles, including information on their current employment, previous jobs, advice to students, and things they were involved in at LVC. When signing up to become a *Career Connections* mentor, alumni are volunteering to be a resource on career related topics including:

- helping you develop a clearer perspective about a career field,
- providing information about a particular company or organization,
- giving advice about what you can do as a student to prepare for entering into a specific field,
- and offering advice on resume development and additional networking.



#### **How do you begin?**

To utilize this resource, you need only enter into your JOB CENTER account either through the Career Services website or the Academic Resources section of *MyLVC*. From there, click on the Mentors (Career Connections) tab on the top navigation bar. You can view the entire list by clicking **Search** or narrow it down by putting in certain criteria. After reading through profiles and finding a few mentors who you would like to learn more from, click on the **Contact Mentor** button at the top of the profile. Their contact information will appear, which you may use to email or call.

*Keep in mind that you are starting a professional relationship and need to interact appropriately and courteously. For help in making your first connection, view the Career Connections folder in the Resource Library of JOB CENTER or stop by Career Services for guidance.*

# Getting the Most from Networking

You've secured a few names of *who* you'd like to network with, now you just need to know *how* to network! Having a plan is always your best course of action. For the first connection, send an email that introduces yourself, explains your purpose for making the contact, and asks if they would be willing to meet with you for a short period of time, in person or over the phone depending on location and preference. Your purpose for contacting them should not be hoping that they will get you a job, it should be about building a relationship and learning anything you can from their experience. Although networking connections can sometimes provide you with leads, it is best not to work under the assumption that networking alone will land you a job, especially when you're making the first connection.

After you have sent your initial email, wait to hear back from the contact. If you haven't after about a week, follow up by telephone to see if the contact is able or willing to meet with you. Be mindful that they have responsibilities that may prevent them from meeting with you right away.

Once you have a scheduled meeting secured, it is a good idea to prepare a list of questions or topics that you are hoping to discuss. Come up with enough so that you will have plenty to talk about, but be aware that you may only get through a few items, depending on time and discussion. Here are a few sample questions that you may wish to jot down:

- Describe a typical day at your work place. What aspects of your responsibilities do you enjoy most/least?
- What are some of the most rewarding aspects of your job?
- What personal characteristics are necessary to be successful in this work?
- What advice would you have for someone interested in doing the type of work you do?
- What is your perception of the employment outlook in this field?
- How do people find out about job openings in this field?
- How did you get started in this field? Do you wish there were things you had known before getting started? Any surprises and/or disappointments?
- Do you know of other persons I might contact that could be helpful to me? May I mention that you referred me to them?



*Note:* It would be helpful for you to send a few of these questions to your contact ahead of time so that he/she knows what to expect and is able to prepare accordingly.

After your meeting, send a note of appreciation to your contact thanking them for their time. If they recommended that you do anything (for example, check out a specific book or website), mention to them that you have followed through and what you have learned. Also let them know, either in your meeting with them or in your thank you note, that you hope to speak with them again to learn more. Finally, keep them apprised of any new developments in your job search/career planning process.

*These are just a few guidelines to help you develop your network - most importantly, be professional at all times!*



## Networking Appropriately

*Contacting a professional for the first time, regardless of the reason, requires a high amount of professionalism and courtesy. It is an excellent chance to make a good impression with others in the field you're hoping to go into and can lead to many opportunities later. Here are a few final tips to remember as you plan your networking endeavors:*

- **Don't waste your contact's time:** It's very similar to speaking with a recruiter at a career fair—you should already know some basic information, as well as what your purpose is for approaching them. If you are inquiring about the profession, have some specific questions in mind to ask as opposed to "can you tell me about your field?"
- **Be confident.** Know what you can offer and be confident in your abilities so that your contact knows what they can do to help you.
- **Listen.** When someone is kind enough to offer you job advice, listen attentively!
- **Use professional courtesy:** Respect that your networking contacts are professionals with their own commitments. Don't drop in uninvited and always ask if he/she has the time to talk about whatever topics you're hoping to cover.
- **Don't expect too much at once.** Don't burden your contact with overwhelming requests for help and advice all at once. You can always ask more at a later time. Similarly, don't expect your network to do the work for you.
- **Get permission** before using a contact's name to approach another prospective contact as well as before putting them down as a reference.
- **Don't be demanding.** Even if you have a great relationship with your contact, don't expect them to stop everything at the drop of a hat.
- **Say thank you!** A quick note of appreciation or phone call to tell them how they've helped goes a long way towards ensuring continued success.
- **Remember that networking is a two-way street!**