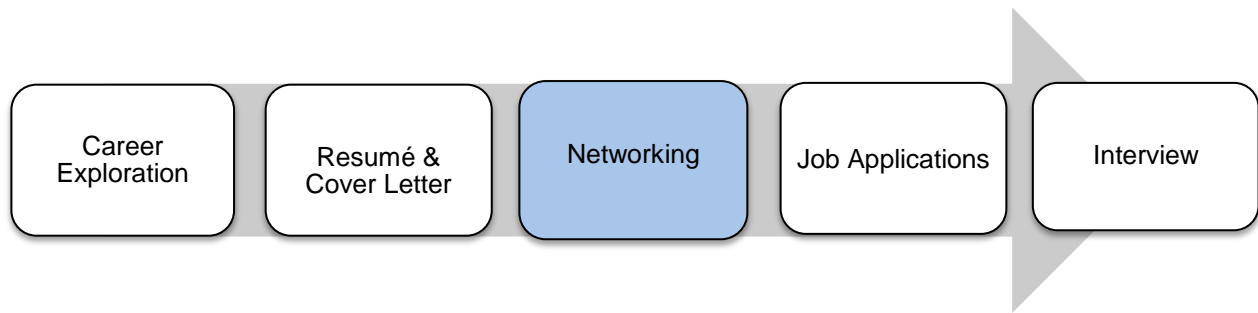




## **Guide to Networking**

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## Introduction



In today's job market, networking is indispensable. Major changes in the last decade, such as the impacts of technology, the internet, and high unemployment rates, have led to fierce competition for job opportunities. In addition, the traditional employer- employee pact has broken down with employees shifting positions and careers numerous times in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>. Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha<sup>2</sup>, the founders of LinkedIn, cite an increase in peer-to-peer career development with professional loyalty increasingly flowing "horizontally" to/from network rather than "vertically" to/from ones boss<sup>3</sup>. What does this all mean for the average job seeker? Networking is more important than ever.

Though there may appear to be many job postings out there (on Indeed or Monster, for example), 'cold' applications to openings such as these have been described as "throwing a paper plane into the universe"<sup>4</sup>. In addition, research on choice shows that this job search method can be especially debilitating<sup>5</sup>. Why does it seem that there are hundreds of possible job postings online, yet random online applications are unfruitful and result in a loss of morale and energy on the part of the job seeker?

### KEY TAKE AWAY

Using tools provided by the Alumni Association of the University of Michigan the modern job seeker's primary goal should, and can be, to find internal employer advocates acquired through strategic yet genuine networking.

This guide will provide a step by step approach to networking by following the 80.10.10 rule, namely, that 80% of a job seeker's energy should be focused on networking, with only 10% on resume crafting and 10% on job postings. Utilizing tools and programs provided by the Alumni Association, your networking strategy should become a practical and manageable task.

<sup>1</sup>*Economist*, September 11, 2011 *Special Report on Careers*.

<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, R. & Casnocha, B. 2012. *The Start-up of You*.

<sup>3</sup> Pink, D. 2002. *Free Agent Nation: The Future of Working For Yourself*.

<sup>4</sup>*Knowledge at Wharton*, February 29 2012, Why the Job Search is like 'Throwing paper airplanes into the galaxy'

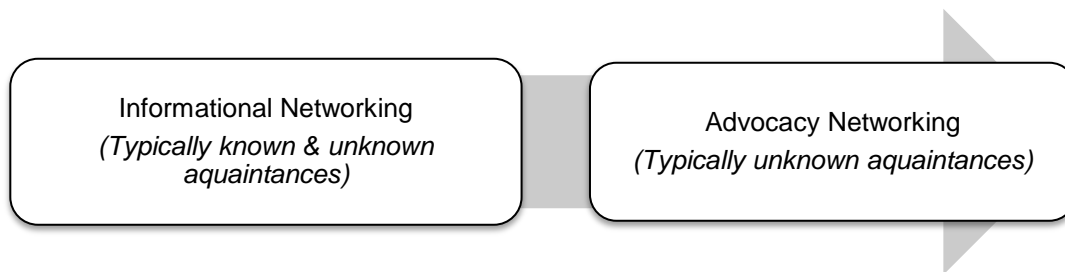
<sup>5</sup>Heath, C. & Heath, D. 2010. *Switch: How to make Change happen when change is hard*.

## What is Networking?

Networking is not about ‘schmoozing’ or ‘using people,’ rather, it is about building genuine positive relationships of trust that are mutually beneficial to both parties. These include peer relationships (of equals) and mentor-mentee relationships. True networking therefore means *not making demands before* a positive relationship based on trust has been established. It means building relationships with people who will still be there even if you don’t need them. In contrast, using people, means simply making demands. While the latter may be detrimental to your job search, genuine networking will allow you access to job possibilities, resources and industry knowledge. By building these relationships you should forge a network of connections so that industry insiders not only know you, but know you *and* your capability.

There are two main types of networking:

1. *Informational and Connective Networking*- to explore industry knowledge and connect you with potential advocates
2. *Advocacy Networking*- to connect with persons who will advocate for your candidacy from within the organization



The goal is to build trust and politely transition from *Informational Networking*, which is simply gaining knowledge and connections, to *Advocacy Networking*, that is building trust to transition to advocacy for a job or internship opportunity. Expecting to jump straight into an advocacy networking relationship without informational interviews, referrals, and trust building will likely not be well received or fruitful.

Understand that genuine networking is a constant process. Begin the networking process well in advance of your job search or of requiring favors. Remember that *Advocacy networking* that is specifically directed toward a job may take between three to six months, so plan well in advance. Remember that even after you have secured a job, networking will allow for advanced professional development and is well worth the continued time investment.

### KEY TAKE AWAY

Build proper relationships based on trust through informational interviews, follow-up emails, event attendance and professional associations. Never simply ask for a job! Start this process well in advance of a job search and continue the process once you have secured a position.

## In Addition to Networking

Keep in mind that while networking should comprise at least 80% of your job search, two other aspects are also important, that is resume crafting and interview preparation. Prior to networking in earnest, particularly advocacy networking (as defined above), ensure your resume is complete. (See the [Alumni Association Guide to the Professional Resume](#)). Contacts you acquire through networking may request a resume to further understand your background or may offer to forward it along to other acquaintances. In addition, informational interviews may quickly lead to formal job interviews- so be prepared by reviewing the [Alumni Association Guide to the Job Interview](#) and practicing your responses through [InterviewStream](#), the Alumni Association's online interview preparation software.

## Two main groups of connections exist for networking purposes:

1. Known Acquaintances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family</li><li>• High school and college friends</li><li>• Former co-workers</li><li>• Sports, church, or other clubs</li><li>• Classmates</li><li>• Faculty</li></ul>
2. Unknown Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Referrals from known acquaintances</li><li>• Alumni accessed through <a href="#">LinkedIn</a> (Advanced Search or LinkedIn Alumni Tool)</li><li>• Alumni and mentors acquired through <a href="#">Alumni Association events</a> such as 30 Minute Mentors.</li><li>• <a href="#">Regional Alumni Clubs</a></li></ul>

## Known Acquaintances

The purpose of networking with your known acquaintances is usually informational or connective- that is to provide you with information concerning an industry of interest or to connect you with industry insiders. Job seekers often tend to overlook this category of persons, yet they may act as powerful connectors with others in the industry or to needed industry information. By starting with persons you know, you build confidence in the networking process and can move on to unknown contacts. The process of networking with known contacts is usually not as formal as with unknown contacts and may tend to be more casual and less defined.

Take the following steps to leverage your connections within this group:

1. Decide on your target position, industry and possibly geographic preference. Please see [Career Exploration](#) for further tips on defining your target position of interest.
2. Generate a list of 20 possible contacts. Track your progress.
3. Contact this group (usually without the formality required for unknown contacts) via the phone, in person or email:
  - a. Depending on your comfort level with this contact, let them know either up front or after some initial conversation that you are job searching and looking for a specific position in a particular industry.
  - b. *Thank* your acquaintance, friend or family member for the conversation via a follow up email within one or two days. Keep them informed of your progress as to how you took heed of their advice or suggestions. By following up with them you maintain a positive relationship and are top-of mind to remind them to connect you with additional contacts or to provide you with further information.
  - c. Maintain your relationships with known contacts. As mentioned previously, networking is about building positive longer term connections. By ensuring you maintain positive relationships; you can improve the speed and efficacy of your overall job search.
  - d. Your friend or family member may connect you with an unknown contact. Follow up on connection offers by scheduling an informational interview with this new unknown contact (please see *Unknown Associations: Write Approach Emails* page 9 and *Conduct Informational Interviews* page 11).

## Unknown Associations

These are persons you may not know but with whom you share a common context- be it a LinkedIn group, the [University of Michigan Alumni Association](#) or a mutual connection. Usually the purpose of networking with unknown contacts is informational or to build a mentorship relationship with a goal towards advocacy. In other words, to gain industry knowledge and to build trust with industry insiders who may advocate for your candidacy for job or internship opportunity. This process is typically more formal and directive and it may be helpful for the job searcher to follow a more rigorous reminder system to track interactions. Contacts within this group may be alumni that you have met in person at one of our [networking events](#) or those located through our various social media platforms ([LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) #umalumjobs). Taking the following steps will help you create and leverage connections with this group:

### Networking in Person

If networking in person, keep in mind the following:

*In Preparation:*

1. Have a *business card*: the Alumni Association offers [free business cards for students](#). This allows connections easy access to your email and contact information for later use.
2. *Do your homework* by reading presenter or alumni bios or LinkedIn profiles (if available in advance). If meeting employees of a specific employer, Google the employer and read employer pages. Set aside 30 minutes for this process. Be prepared to ask intelligent questions and provide thoughtful responses.

*In Person:*

3. *Smile:* Remember to smile not scowl. A smile warms people up.
4. *Ask a Question:* Asking a question builds engagement, rather than barging in to a conversation with an opinion.
5. *Listen:* Listen with genuine interest, people love talking about their experiences and opinions.
6. *Say the person's name:* When you meet someone, use his name in the conversation<sup>6</sup>.

*Follow-Up:*

7. *Keep a record* of your exchanges and connections by jotting down who you spoke to and what you discussed. Networking only becomes beneficial to you if you can remember and track this information for easy follow-up.
8. *Quality not quantity is the name of the game*, a thousand business cards given and received don't mean much without the establishment of genuine positive relationships.
9. Send a *follow up email* thanking the alumni for their time and indicating how you took heed to their advice. This is step is essential in forging longer-term relationships that illustrate your commitment.

## **The 2-Hour Job Search (A Targeted Alumni Networking Strategy)**



*The following steps refer to strategies outlined by Steve Dalton in his book, [The 2-Hour Job Search \(2012\)](#), and are used with author permission. Please see [The 2-Hour Job Search](#) to execute these steps.*

*The 2-Hour Job Search* utilizes alumni groups and current technology to manage networking for a targeted job search in a structured and highly effective way. By mitigating for the nebulous and unstructured nature of the traditional concept of networking, *The 2-Hour Job Search*, utilizes technology to provide a definite strategy to manage the process. By using your known acquaintances, you are networking by relationship first; in contrast, *The 2-Hour Job Search* is networking by employer first, yet using the common context of alumni status. For many who have a notion that networking is intimidating and only for the Type A's among us, this method overturns those concepts, as it distills networking to its objective, professional elements, in straightforward steps that anyone can follow. It has been put into practice at top business schools and universities around the country.

There are three main steps to the process:

1. *Prioritize:* Create LAMP list
2. *Contact:* Send emails and set up informational interviews
3. *Recruit:* Conduct informational interviews, thank you and follow up

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<sup>6</sup>Carnegie, D. 1936. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

## Step 1: Prioritize

Create a LAMP list in Excel

1. List column-list out 40 companies, including:
  - a. 'Dream employers'
  - b. Employers currently posting jobs of interest to you on [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)
  - c. Employers where alumni work ([Alumni Association of the University of Michigan's Official LinkedIn Group](#) and use the new Alumni LinkedIn Tool located under Contacts > University of Michigan)

*Tip: Limit your time and distraction tendencies by following the 'two click rule' - never follow an Internet lead for more than two clicks to ensure you stay on track*

2. Alumni column- figure out if there are Alumni at the employers listed in 1.
  - a. Join the [Alumni Association of the University of Michigan's Official LinkedIn Group](#) and use the new Alumni LinkedIn Tool located under Contacts > University of Michigan
  - b. Complete the alumni column of the LAMP list with 'Y' or 'N.' Do not search for email addresses or contact information (this step takes place later).
3. Motivation- assess your motivation to approach contacts at the employers listed
  - a. Assign a score of 1 to companies that are unknown to you
  - b. Assign a score of 2 to companies you may know but find less motivating
  - c. Assign a score of 5 to dream employers, those you find the most motivating
4. Postings- Using Indeed.com, assess these employers current hiring activity
  - a. Assign a score of 3 when finding postings for employer and the specific position or job in question. Search <employer name><job keyword>
  - b. Assign a score of 2 when finding postings for the employer in question. Search <employer name>
  - c. Assign a score of 1 when you find no postings for the employer or position in question
5. Use the filter function to sort your list:
  - a. Motivation- from largest to smallest
  - b. Posting- from largest to smallest
  - c. Alumni- reverse alphabetically causing Y to appear before N
  - d. Result- you should now have a list of employers where there are alumni, that you are motivated to reach out to and who are currently hiring. Your top 5 to 10 employers are now your networking targets and potential informational interview leads.

Your list may look something like this:

<u>List</u>	<u>Alumni</u>	<u>Motivation</u>	<u>Postings</u>
Trinity Health	Y	5	3
Blue Cross Blue Shield UMHS	N	5	3
AT Kearney	Y	5	2
PwC	Y	4	2
	N	3	2

## Step 2: Contact

1. If you are not able to locate alumni emails utilize [LinkedIn](#). Take the following steps:
  - a. Using the advanced people search function in LinkedIn, fill in Employer name, select 'current'. You may also want to specify 'University of Michigan' in 'School' to leverage your mutual alumni status with potential contacts
  - b. Utilize second degree connections by reaching out to first degree connection and asking for a polite introduction
  - c. If second degree connections are not available, utilize your mutual group status as University of Michigan alumni. In this case LinkedIn will only provide contact first name, last initial, and employer. Google this information to find their email or search Emails4Corporations
2. Write approach emails to target contacts to ask for an informational interview. Remember the following:
  - a. Keep the email brief - less than 100 words is preferable
  - b. Make no mention of jobs- one of the quickest ways to alienate a potential booster is to ask for favors before trust is built
  - c. Put connection first- give your contact a reason to care and pay attention (this may be your mutual status as University of Michigan alumni)
  - d. Generalize your interest- by being general you avoid the risk of alienating contacts who may have helpful advice or connections but who are not hiring ("I am trying to learn about careers in Human Capital Consulting on the East Coast and your insight would be very helpful")
  - e. (Maintain control of follow up- do not mention this explicitly yet you may want to implicitly recognize that you may follow-up at a later date)
3. Track

Remember your goal is to find boosters- those who will take the time to talk to you and who may ultimately recommend you for an opportunity. Keep in mind that alumni may not have the time to respond or may have numerous reasons for their lack of reciprocation. Focus on the boosters, don't sweat those who never reciprocate, or get tangled with those who simply feel obliged, simply move on by using the following 3 Business days 7 Business Days or 3B7 routine.

- a. Set two reminders in Google Calendar every time email is sent to a new contact
  1. Reminder 1: 3 business days later
  2. Reminder 2: 7 business days later
- b. If receive response before Reminder 1 (within 3 days — may be a booster!), schedule informational ASAP
- c. If no response before Reminder 1, initiate outreach to second possible contact at same employer (again setting up "3B7")
- d. If no response before Reminder 2 (within 7 days), follow up with original contact
- e. Reach out to alumni or contacts beyond your top five or ten targets identified on LAMP list when an employer is ruled out.



### Sample Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
18 Sent email to Toyota Tech Center #1	19	20	21 -3 day reminder Toyota Tech Center #1 -Sent email to Toyota Tech Center #2	22
25	26 3 day reminder Toyota Tech Center #2	27 7 day reminder Toyota Tech Center #1	28	29
2 7 day reminder Toyota Tech Center #2	3	4	5	6

### Step 3: Recruit

#### Conduct Informational Interviews

A safe and effective way to approach informational interviews is to ask questions about the alumni's career path to their current employer. Questions as to their career development may yield helpful insights, resources, and referrals. Take the following steps:

1. Prepare for the Informational Interview:
  - a. Be prepared to answer the "tell me about yourself" question or "your story". Please see [Alumni Association Guide to the Job Interview](#) page 4 for further detail.
  - b. Take the time to review the employer website to find out about current initiatives or new programs.
  - c. Google the employer and the interviewer and review their LinkedIn profile
2. *Do not ask for a job, simply advice and mentoring.* Never directly ask for a job- even if this is your goal. Let the alumni decide if they are willing to advocate for you. Remember that if you sell yourself too quickly and ask for favors without first illustrating your intelligence and commitment, alumni may become hesitant to help you.
3. The following TIARA framework may be useful in structuring informational interview questions, as it leads from open-ended questions about their experience to more focused questions about how they can help you. The goal is to politely transition alumni from informational contact to active mentor. Remember to maintain politeness and adopt a more formal tone unless otherwise indicated.

Structure of the interview:

- a. Small Talk: How are you? How is your day going so far?
  - b. Lay out the agenda
  - c. TIARA
    - i. Trends (Ex: What trends are impacting your business right now?)
    - ii. Insights (Ex: What's your most valuable experience at your employer so far?)
    - iii. Advice (Ex: What can I be doing right now to prepare myself for a career in this field?)
    - iv. Resources (Ex: What resources should I look into next?)
    - v. Assignments (Ex: What projects are most important to your work?)<sup>7</sup>
  - d. Next steps: If a referral is offered, commit and schedule follow-up, thank them again for their time.
4. Follow-up
- a. Always send a *thank you email* as follow-up after an informational interview within one or two days. This not only gives you the opportunity to thank them for their time and the helpful information they provided, but allows you to request additional suggestions and to continue to forge a relationship of trust with them that will cause you to be 'top of mind' when an opportunity at their organization opens up.
  - b. Track your success in your calendar. Calendar reminders are helpful in setting your networking strategy on "autopilot".

*A special thank you to Steve Dalton, author of [The 2-Hour Job Search](#), for kindly allowing us to utilize his phenomenal principles in the creation of this networking guide. Please see [The 2-Hour Job Search](#) to execute the steps outlined.*

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<sup>7</sup>The 2-Hour Job Search. Dalton. S. p175.

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