

Building and Maintaining a Strong Professional Network

William A. Gruver, PhD, FIEEE
Simon Fraser University

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Outline

- Why network
- How and where to network
- What to do and what not to do
- Using networking to build a professional identity
- Using networking to get a job or a new position
- Using networking to attract opportunities
- Professional networking platforms

Why Network

- Find Career Opportunities
 - Networking can expose you to jobs not posted online or in newspapers
- Find Personal Opportunities
 - Relationships you develop can be used for identifying practical solutions to everyday life
- Identify Best Practices
 - Networking is a great way to identify best practices or benchmarks.
- Identify New Trends
 - Networking can help you stay on the cutting edge of technology and trends

How to Network

- Invite someone to join you for lunch
 - Get out from behind your desk
 - Invite a potential reference or colleague
- Have business cards handy
 - Don't leave home without them
- Keep your contacts fresh
 - Touch base with your key contacts every few months
- Choose events wisely
 - Determine whom you would like to meet

Where to Network

- Contacts with potential employers
- Professional conferences and meetings
- Networking events
- Research presentations to visitors
- Seminars in your department and outside
- Visits to companies

How to Set Expectations

- You don't need to know a lot of people, only the right people
 - Focus on finding people who are relevant to your career
 - Better to have 5 people willing to help you than to have 500 people who simply know your name
- Don't expect anything in return
 - Instead of approaching networking with the goal of gaining favors, try reaching out with curiosity
- Determine what you want from your network
 - Be proactive and create a list of people to contact
- Go beyond your area of interest
 - By growing your network outside of the usual areas you will be more valuable to people in your immediate area

How to be Effective

- Determine what you want out of networking
 - Obtain advise on a project, offer skills to a professional, ...
- Schedule your time effectively
 - Create blocks of time by day, week, month for networking
- Make people remember you
 - Engage the listener with an “60 second elevator pitch”
 - Dress professionally
- Be engaging
 - Show enthusiasm for your work, ask questions
- Use social media
 - LinkedIn, Google+, ...

How to be Effective (cont.)

- Remember names and details about people
 - Develop creative ways to remember contacts
 - Write details about people on their business cards
- Follow up with a handwritten note or phone call
 - Send a reference to an article or book that you discussed
- Remain organized
 - Always get contact information
 - Maintain a diary of contacts
- Let go of fear
 - Enjoy the opportunity of meeting new people
 - Think of your entire life as a networking opportunity

How to Build Relationships

- Try to provide as much value as possible
 - By creating value, people will come back to you
- Start by being friendly and helpful
 - Be interested in what they are doing and offer friendly suggestions
- Develop the habit of introducing people
 - Connecting like-minded people is a powerful tool to enhance your network
 - Ask people if they want to be connected
- Network within the groups that are close to you
 - Don't forget your friends and co-workers

How to Build Value

- Ask yourself the question, how can I make people better as a result of connecting with me?
- Find out how you can help others get what they want
- Examples
 - Give them a job referral or lead
 - Invite them to an event they might think is worthwhile
 - Send them a paper that is relevant to their interests
 - Ask if you could endorse them for a position or award

“Whatever form of value you give, be it service or monetary, you will likely receive the same or greater value in return. Giving value, though, must come from an open heart.”

What Not to Do

- Don't be timid
 - Don't only talk to people whom you already know
- Don't only speak to one person
 - The more people the better
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
 - People like to show their expertise so ask a lot of questions
- Avoid excessive self-promotion
 - Give a short summary of your background and then listen to the other person
- Don't forget to follow up
 - And do it quickly
- Don't drink too much
 - It could destroy your image

Professional Networking Platforms






Linked  ?




LinkedIn

- Establish your professional profile
- Build and maintain a broader network of professional.
- Find and reconnect with colleagues and classmates
- Learn about other companies
- Leverage tools to find and reach the people you need
- Tap into the knowledge of your network
- Discover new opportunities

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Final Comments

- The goal of networking should be to help other people
 - Networking is a two-way street.
 - Your side of the street is all about helping others, not asking them to help you.
 - Asking for favors should only become a possibility once you have learned more about the person and provided some value to them.
- Understand their needs before you tell them what you want
 - You are trying to develop a relationship with someone, which means you should be thinking about them.
 - Understand the people in your network, where they are coming from, and what is important to them.

