Networking

“What is networking? Networking is about connecting with people. It is about building and maintaining trusting relationships throughout your life. It is an essential skill all students need to learn as part of their lifelong career management.”

Demystifying networking

Networking is not solely about getting what you want, but is also about helping others. What goes around comes around. If networking is done with the intention of mutual generosity it creates genuine lifelong relationships based on trust and respect, fuelled by the desire to help one another. Even if you don’t think you have anything to offer the other person, being an active listener who is genuinely attentive and interested in others is also a form of generosity.

Why networking is essential

It is estimated the majority of job openings (approximately 80 per cent) are filled through word-of-mouth or networking, known as the ‘hidden job market’.

Networking also provides opportunities to:

• learn from others’ experiences in your industry
• understand and apply different approaches
• discover professional development opportunities
• find and share new resources
• form a relationship with a mentor
• identify new pathways
• help others.

It is therefore important to let people know who you are, and what you’re looking for. You never know who might know someone, who knows someone, who can link you to an opportunity, a mentor, or a new direction!

10 key networking steps

1. Identify the people in your inner and outer circles.
2. Be friendly. Get to know them. Be assertive. What are their roles, values, interests?
3. How do these relate to your interests and career aspirations?
4. Contact them in person, via email or by telephone for an informal chat (or ask for an information interview).
5. Start a dialogue about their job, the industry, or something related. See tips on next page.
6. Understand their needs, and what’s important to them, before considering your own priorities.
7. After establishing a relationship, ask if they would like to see your resume for feedback, or to keep on file if an opportunity becomes available.
8. Ask them if they would mind facilitating further introductions.
9. Thank them for their time and let them know how helpful they were, and keep in contact.
10 And most importantly, ask how you can help them.
Identify and expand your network circle

Create a useful, ongoing, lifelong list of contacts and information. You may wish to start by mind mapping or brainstorming to initially identify all the people you know. Then keep a database of all these contacts with their details, background, knowledge and any other relevant information. Keep this list current and active.

Build communities through social networking: tweets, blogs, posts, photo and video sharing, e-networking, and most importantly LinkedIn. Join professional associations, student associations and LinkedIn Southern Cross University Alumni. Participate in resume workshops. Begin volunteering. Attend professional development conferences and workshops. Consider conducting information interviews. Play to your strengths and interests and identify where you may meet a diverse range of people — join teams, extracurricular classes or groups that you are going to enjoy or learn from, for example, book clubs, craft circles, gyms or self-development groups.

Networking tips

A relationship is a two-way street. Don’t just think how this person can help you, but also how you may help them. Gratitude is an important quality and without it networking will not be successful.

Follow the 80/20 rule. In order to build relationships, the other person needs to feel heard. To do this, listen about 80 per cent of the time and only talk about 20 per cent, if possible.

- Practise with people you feel most comfortable with, and then push yourself outside your comfort zone.
- Be visible and be seen. Networks will not come to you. You need to start the ball rolling.
- Use contacts’ names in conversations and remember them.
- Share and be open and generous with your information.
- Receive feedback gracefully and gratefully.
- Ask them for their advice. Dig deeper. Learn.
- Be genuine, honest and patient, without expectations.
- Focus on the quality of relationships not the quantity.
- Follow up with your contacts every two to three months in order to maintain relationships.
- Document the process reflectively and consolidate what you have learnt.

Checklist – networking

☐ I have worked through the Career Management stream in the SCU Career Development Program.
☐ I know how essential it is to network.
☐ I am networking with a spirit of generosity, giving not just taking.
☐ I have identified all the people in my inner and outer circles.
☐ I have joined other professional or personal associations, clubs or groups.
☐ I have an online presence.
☐ I am proactively attending events.
☐ I am building new diverse networks, and maintaining current ones.
☐ I am enjoying the process and having fun. If I’m not, what do I need to do differently?

Where to find more help

- SCU Career Development Program on MySCU – learn.scu.edu.au
- Visit careerhub.scu.edu.au for job vacancies, events and resources
- Email for a careers consultation: careers@scu.edu.au
- For further resources and fact sheets go to scu.edu.au/careers