

Networking

Many jobs in the UK are not advertised, and networking can be a useful way of helping you secure employment in your chosen job role or industry sector. This handout is designed to provide you with information about what networking is and what networking is not, practical tips about how you can do it and where to find further help.

Collins English Dictionary defines networking as ‘an interconnected group or system; to form business contacts through informal social meetings.’

NETWORKING IS NOT

- about asking influential people for a job (they’re unlikely to have one at the ready when you ask)
- about getting a job solely because of who you know (although this does happen)
- only for people who have good contacts (everybody can develop a network)
- an unfair system. In the UK, jobs will not always be advertised and many jobs are found through networking and speculative applications, but candidates still need to demonstrate that they meet employers’ requirements

NETWORKING IS

- a highly effective and recommended method for increasing your awareness of opportunities when job hunting and for making potential employers aware of you
- recognising and developing mutual interests and making use of these interests and the people contacted through them to achieve your aims.
- finding out from other people about a particular industry, job role or employer, for example
- gaining insider knowledge about jobs that may become available and when
- finding out about who does what in an organisation that interests you and who might be responsible for hiring

NETWORKING - HOW YOU CAN DO IT

Anyone can network and that includes you! To become a good networker, consider using and developing your informal and formal social skills, aim to approach people and develop good communication skills, especially active listening.

If you are a little reserved and shy, then you can develop good networking skills simply by asking questions and showing a

genuine interest in others. Learn to follow up and stay in touch with contacts you’ve made. Here are six steps to help you make a positive impact:

Step 1: Know your aim. Networking works better when you have researched your chosen career area and industry sector and you have a fairly clear idea of what kind of job interests you the most.

Step 2: Who are your contacts already? List people you know who are connected to your chosen career area and people who may know someone else who is. Consider academic staff, alumni, employers/alumni visiting our careers fairs, parents/relatives, their friends, parents and relatives of your friends and so on. Each of these contacts is likely to have their own network of further contacts.

Step 3: Consider potential opportunities and situations where you could connect with your chosen career area. These might be careers fairs on campus, employer talks, conferences, industry projects, professional bodies, special interest groups and so on.

Step 4: What would you say to someone you’ve just met and who could be a very useful contact? It might help to prepare a short paragraph or two, introducing yourself, stating what you have to offer and what your plans are as a good starting point. This might include what you’re currently doing at Imperial, some information about relevant work experience/projects/skills developed and your thoughts or ideas about how your contact could help you (e.g. provide a few minutes of their time to discuss ...).

You may have heard the phrases ‘30 second CV’ or ‘elevator pitch’ – it’s what you would say to someone who might be an ideal contact in the time it takes to go up a few floors in a lift.

Step 5: Follow up your arrangements with your contact and prepare questions you wish to ask. Perhaps you might want to know what it is like to work for the organisation. What does a typical day look like? What does your contact enjoy/not enjoy about the job role? What views are there about the future of the industry? Are there any imminent changes? Much depends on what you wish to find out, but a few questions prepared in advance can help.

Step 6: If your contact has given up some valuable time to talk to you, thank them afterwards, verbally and perhaps also by email, strengthening a positive impression. This could summarise what you’ve said about yourself, similar to a covering letter, reiterating your knowledge, experience, skills and motivation. You could include a statement that you wish



to be considered, should a position come up. You could also attach a copy of your CV, if they haven't got a copy of it already. Please note that these steps are provided as a guide only, and they are by no means the 'perfect' way to network. For example, networking can also begin with sending an introductory email, attaching your CV and then following this up with a phone call and perhaps a meeting or a discussion in person or over the phone.

ONLINE NETWORKING SITES

In addition to networking through your usual preferred sites, there are also specific networking sites, for example:

- Alumni Association – Imperial College London: www.imperial.ac.uk/alumni (120,000 members in over 180 countries)
- Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET): www.theiet.org/my/contacts
- London Technology Network
- Women in Science forum: www.nature.com/scitable/forums/women-in-science
- Women's Engineering Society (WES): www.wes.org.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA

Networking via social media offers another useful way of networking and can be useful for finding contacts as well as staying informed about your field of interest. For example, LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is a widely used professional networking site that enables individuals to connect with one another or join interest groups across the globe. Once you are a group member, you will be able to learn about other members and you can study their career paths, for example. You can also connect with people directly, pose questions or simply read up about current debates to inform your understanding of a job sector. Make sure you create a personal profile and write a short summary statement about you to use LinkedIn effectively.

Many employers have created Facebook pages, there are Twitter feeds and blogs – all of which can help you stay informed about the industry sector you are hoping to enter. Before you get actively involved in using social media for networking and job hunting, consider typing your own name into Google to check your digital footprint and ensure that what people see is what you would like them to see.

Why not also join us on Facebook – www.facebook.com/imperialcareerservice and on Twitter - www.twitter.com/imperialcareers to keep up to date with our events.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Available from the Careers Service:

- **Careers Service website:** www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/opportunities/networking
- **Bookable appointments** with Careers Consultants: book through JobsLive*
- **Reference books** - including: including: 'After You Graduate', Leila Roberts, Open University Press; 'Career Skills – Opening Doors into the Job Market', David

Littleford, John Halstead and Charles Mulrairie, Palgrave Study Guides; 'How To Get A Job You'll Love', John Lees, McGraw Hill; 'The Monster Guide To Job Hunting', Andrew Chapman, Prentice Hall; 'What Color is Your Parachute?', Richard Nelson Bolles, Ten Speed Press (US Publication), available in the Careers Service, level 5 Sherfield Building

- **Careers Service events** - each year we plan talks and workshops which are designed to enhance your chances of success in the application process - for details, see JobsLive*
- For information on the disclosure of disability or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia please see information on the Careers Service website: www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/disclosure

* www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive