

**Fact or Fiction?**

*You must be extroverted to succeed*  
*You need to have 'connections'*  
*You should talk to people at senior levels*

Congratulations if you dispute these common myths about networking, a topic that's both widely misunderstood and anxiety provoking. There's only one thing people can agree on about networking: we really *should* do it. The details ~ how, when, where, and with whom ~ vary dramatically from one expert to another.

*Here's a simple model designed for Tufts students interested in using networking as a career development tool:*

**Networking = research = a process of collecting useful information**

We conduct research every day. When you're applying to college, you don't rely on online resources; you talk to teachers, guidance counselors, family members, and students at your target schools. Later, when you're moving off campus, you ask for advice about realtors and apartments. When your family comes to visit, perhaps you get tips about good restaurants in Boston.

Each of these scenarios involves collecting useful information. When applied to career search, networking is a process of asking people for information about occupations, employers, and industries. With each person you speak, you learn more about the world of work ~ and where you best fit. *People are your primary sources.*

**Yeah, but ...**

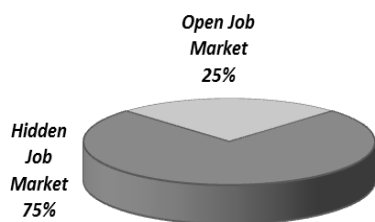
*"Why would anyone want to meet with me?" "I don't know people in the \_\_\_\_ field." "I'm not the networking type."*  
*"Why talk to someone if they don't have jobs?" "I tried networking, and it didn't work." "I'm uncomfortable asking people for help."*

You *can* do this. In other areas of your life, from academics to service, you strive to achieve, you excel, you embrace intellectual challenge.

Here's why you have to overcome hesitancy, doubt, and confusion to master the skill of networking:

80% of available jobs never get advertised  
70 – 80% of job seekers find their positions through referrals

**Where are the jobs?**



Most jobs are never advertised, comprising what's known as the hidden job market. Even in the open market of online postings, many are positions for which a strong candidate has already been identified. How? It could be a current employee moving into a new position or an individual who impressed employees during a networking meeting.

**TIP:** Spend 75% of your job search time on networking and the remainder on online applications. Before applying online, find the networking possibility in every job posting by identifying and reaching out to employees whom you may know through Tufts or other sources.

Schedule an appointment for personalized coaching with a Career Advisor. A professional can help you focus and prioritize your next steps.

## Networking happens in different ways: Strategy & Serendipity

“I got lucky!” “You won’t believe this!” “What a coincidence.” These are clues that point to networking. Ask for more information and you’ll inevitably hear an interesting story. Networking can be serendipitous (e.g., chatting in line at Starbucks) or strategic (e.g., planning an informational interview).

### Elevator Scripts: How to connect with people you don’t know

Be ready for surprise opportunities by preparing an elevator script, a 30-second statement introducing yourself with a few key facts designed to generate a conversation with a virtual stranger. Offer information that allows someone to connect with you over a shared interest or experience. If you’re engaged in a job search, one fact should relate to your professional goals.

For example, “I’m a Tufts senior exploring media careers.” This can lead to a discussion about Tufts, your post graduate plans, and/or your interest in media. You may not recognize this as networking ... until your contact says, “My best friend works at NPR.” Now, you’re in a position to move the conversation toward NPR and the possibility of an informational interview. (See Informational Interviewing information below).

Contrary to what you may hear elsewhere, this is *not* supposed to be an elevator *pitch*. A pitch implies a target, as in a job interview where you’re expected to promote your skills, knowledge, and experience for a specific position. If you’re on an elevator with a stranger, save your sales pitch; you don’t know what you’re aiming at!

### STRATEGIC NETWORKING

This tutorial primarily addresses strategic networking, a research process that is deliberate in identifying people as primary sources. Among these sources could be alumni, faculty, family, friends, parents of your friends, former colleagues, coaches, and supervisors. Your research methods will include Informational Interviewing, meetings where you meet with an “expert” to collect useful data and advice.

### The Informational Interview: most popular example of strategic networking

An informational interview is a conversation with someone who can give you an insider’s perspective on a profession, employer, or industry. An informational interview allows you to brainstorm with knowledgeable individuals about your career interests, enlist expert guidance, share your goals, and position yourself as a *potential* candidate for the future.

Informational interviewing is a form of research. Determine your learning goals according to your stage of career development. First year students may focus on career exploration; seniors launching a job search may be more tightly focused on specific occupations or industries. Use secondary sources (e.g., Tisch research guides) for background knowledge. Then, identify primary sources who can amplify and clarify from their first-person experiences.

**Join the *Tufts Career Networking Group* on LinkedIn,  
managed by the Tufts Career Center!**

**Learn more by visiting the Networking section of the Career Center website—<http://careers.tufts.edu>**

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# Three Steps to an Informational Interview: Goal Setting, Exchange of Information, Memorability (G.E.M.)

## 1. GOAL SETTING

Perhaps you want an internship. Or maybe you're a senior with no idea what you want to do after graduation. You feel overwhelmed at the prospect of job search. Getting an internship or a job is BIG goal, involving many smaller goals. Make the process less intimidating and more manageable by breaking down your overarching intention into smaller steps that are clear and measurable.

**Begin with self-assessment.** Consider your own skills, interests, and values. You may want to schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor to guide you through this process. Once you have a better sense of yourself, you're ready to explore where you best fit in the workplace.

Based on the knowledge that you gain through self-assessment, which occupations and industries interest you? Use online resources (available through the Tufts Career Center and Tisch Library) to gain as much information as possible. Create a list, focus on your top areas of interest, and get ready to begin your research with primary sources (a.k.a. networking).

**TIP:** Don't approach a primary source thinking, "I hope I get an internship." Instead, ask yourself, "What can I learn from this person? What kind of information and advice would help me in my job/internship search?"

**Identify and communicate with sources.** What information will help you decide if an occupation or industry is actually a good fit? This phase of your research is essentially a matching process: aligning what you know of yourself with what you learn about a job or industry. Ask yourself, "Who has firsthand knowledge and experience to help me figure this out?" *Make a list of people/primary sources.*

### EMAIL or LINKEDIN MESSAGE ETIQUETTE

- *Send a brief introduction (use the 'no scroll' rule) and request time to "meet or speak."*
- *Carefully craft your subject line. "Career question from Tufts senior," "Referral from Professor Smith"*
- *Don't ask questions that will halt communication ("Are you hiring?")*
- *Don't begin your email text with, "My name is ...." Your recipient will see your name in two places: the From line as well as your closing line.*
- *Say "thank you."*
- *Proof for perfection.*
- *No response? Strategize with a Career Advisor*

### Join LinkedIn!

Social media, and more specifically, LinkedIn, is an excellent networking tool to integrate into your job search. When used appropriately, LinkedIn can help you to connect with **Tufts alumni and other professionals in your industry.** After you've completed your LinkedIn profile and connected with people you know, you should join Tufts and other industry groups that relate to your academic and/or career interests. Review the Tufts LinkedIn Guide on the Career Center website and then join the *Tufts Career Networking Group* (managed by the Tufts Career Center) and other Tufts groups including the Tufts University Professional Network (open to all students) and Tufts University Alumni (open to seniors, grad students & alumni only). You can message alumni through these groups and request 20 – 30 minutes to ask for advice.

Do not fall into a common trap, asking about job or internship openings. People don't usually have jobs to offer; they always have advice. LinkedIn allows group members to message one another, even if they are not directly connected. By using these simple steps, you can contact alumni in shared groups and request an informational interview. To message a fellow group member, go to the group's page and click the "member" tab at the top of the screen. Now, search for the person with whom you'd like to connect. Hover over their name when it appears in the search results, which will cause a button on the right of the screen to appear that says "send message." Click this button to e-mail the contact a short personalized note requesting an informational interview. See page 6 of this handout for an example e-mail.

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# Three Steps to an Informational Interview: Goal Setting, Exchange of Information, Memorability (G.E.M.)

## 2. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

At an informational interview, you'll be speaking with busy people so make the most of their time. Prepare for the meeting as if it were a presentation or exam. Design questions to get information about a job, company or industry that cannot be found online. Background research using secondary sources (e.g., news sources, trade journals) will ensure that you present yourself as motivated, well informed, and enthusiastic.

**You requested the meeting, so you're in charge of the agenda.** Consider the kind of information that will be most helpful in your career search. Use open-ended questions and avoid ones answerable with a "yes" or "no."

### Example Questions

- *Which skills are most valuable in this field?*
- *What's your ideal profile when you're hiring a new team member?*
- *Are there courses or extracurricular activities that would help me prepare for this work?*

*See page 8 for a list of questions.*

**Incorporate what you've learned from your advance research.** For example, be sure to understand how current events are affecting this particular organization or industry. You could mention a recent article in a professional journal, a relevant topic you're studying in class, or developments such as leadership changes or new product lines. Stay current by using Twitter or the Research Guides at Tisch: <http://researchguides.library.tufts.edu>

**Smart questions will elicit useful data.** Asking how your contact got her job can be helpful if it's an entry-level position and the hiring has been within the past year or so. That same question, posed to a mid-career professional, will not be useful for you. Instead, you might ask what she looks for (skills? experience? knowledge?) in hiring entry-level employees. Likewise, asking "What do you like or dislike about your work?" may squander precious minutes of your meeting on information that may not be relevant to you. Craft questions that probe your own areas of interest.

**It's an exchange of information, so be ready to answer questions about yourself.** What will you say, when you're asked, "Tell me about yourself" or "Why are you interested in \_\_\_\_\_?" Prepare a brief response that explains your background and why/how it relates to this individual's career experience.

Nervous? Keep in mind that you and your contact share something in common: the Tufts experience, an individual who referred you, or a mutual career interest.

### TIP: Never ask for a job!

This is the surest way to sabotage a conversation because most people don't have jobs to offer at any given point in time. (They do have valuable information, advice, and a network of contacts.) If you ask this fatal question, the answer is likely to be "no," and now you're at an awkward pause. Instead, ask open-ended questions and you'll keep the conversation on a positive note, build rapport with your contact, and learn useful information that supports your career search.

### First Impressions Count

- *Consider this a professional meeting in every way, from attire to conduct.*
- *Dress as if it were an actual job interview.*
- *Be prompt.*
- *Bring a list of questions and something for note-taking.*
- *Always say "thank you" and follow up with an email or handwritten note.*

These two "golden questions" are guaranteed to elicit valuable information for you.

**If you were in my position, with an interest in \_\_\_\_\_, what steps would you take today?**

**Based on my interest in \_\_\_\_\_, who else should I be talking to?**

Don't overstay. If you asked for 20-30 minutes, wrap up with your source at that point. At the same time, be flexible if your contact extends the meeting. Remember to say "thank you."

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## Three Steps to an Informational Interview: Goal Setting, Exchange of Information, Memorability (G.E.M.)

### 3. MEMORABILITY

How will you be remembered? Marketers have mastered the art of memorability. We recommend that you create your own marketing campaign, staying memorable with your networking contacts through creative and judiciously timed communication.

**Your first follow-up should be a ‘thank you’ note, handwritten or email.** If your writing is legible, the latter creates a more memorable impression. Why not buy Tufts note cards to correspond with alumni? In your follow-up, be as specific as possible; for example, citing particularly helpful advice from your contact or new decisions you’ve made as a result of the meeting. This customization improves the typical, “thank you for taking the time to meet with me.” There’s nothing wrong with this generic version; however, it’s not memorable or, as they say in marketing, it’s not differentiating.

**Use the information you’ve gained from your research to tailor your resume, cover letter, and job search techniques.** Keep accurate records and find reasons to stay top-of-mind with your contacts. This helps them think of you when they learn of a possible opportunity or an interesting lead.

**“Pay it forward.”** The notion of reciprocity underlies networking. In accepting the favor of a meeting, you implicitly indicate that you’re willing to be helpful, either to this individual or to others who seek your guidance in the future. After the ‘thank you’ note, future communication should be carefully timed and based on mutual career interests. A Career Advisor can help you with this as well as all aspects of your networking.

#### What’s Next?

*Make an appointment with the Career Center to customize the GEM research model for your own networking.*

#### YOUR TURN: A WARM-UP EXERCISE

Identify someone who could be a source of career information and use the following framework to get organized. When your contact says “yes,” you’ll begin your research to prepare for the meeting.

CONTACT NAME:

EMPLOYER & POSITION:

YOUR CONNECTION (How do you know of this person?):

EMAIL OR LINKEDIN MESSAGE SUBJECT LINE:

DRAFT (Write your first sentence):

SAMPLE QUESTION FOR YOUR SOURCE: What can you learn from this individual that could not be found online?

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# Sample Networking Emails & LinkedIn Messages

## LinkedIn connection

Subject line: Tufts IR Major Seeking Career Advice

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

I'm a junior IR major at Tufts and I found your name through the Tufts Professional Networking Group on LinkedIn. From your LinkedIn profile, I see that you've worked at a variety of NGOs, most recently in Syria.

As I've focused my own studies on the Middle East, including time spent studying abroad in Cairo, I'd like to return to the region after college. I'd love to hear about your own experiences living and working in the region, as well as any advice you might have for me as I plan for an international job search.

I wonder if it might be possible to speak, at your convenience, on the phone or via Skype? Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

Tufts University, Class of XXXX

## LinkedIn connection

Subject line: Career Questions from Tufts Student

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

As a Tufts sophomore with an interest in healthcare consulting, I'm contacting you to learn about your career and how you prepared for it while at Tufts. My experience as a Community Health major and leadership in a health-related student organization have inspired my interest and exploration of this sector.

I found your name in the Tufts Career Networking Group on LinkedIn, and see that you had several internships prior to your first job after graduation as an Analyst. It would be helpful to hear about your experience as an intern and then full-time analyst in this field.

Would it be possible to meet or speak with you to discuss my questions about healthcare consulting? I understand that you're very busy, and appreciate any time you may be able to offer.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

## LinkedIn connection

Subject line: Tufts Senior Interested in Event Planning

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

I recently found your profile through the Tufts Career Networking Group on LinkedIn and see that you're working at (Company Name) as an Event Coordinator. I am a Tufts senior who has become interested in event planning as a result of my extracurricular activities. I've enjoyed coordinating lectures and networking events for the Tufts History Society and, as a result, I have become interested in the possibility of pursuing event planning as a career path. Would it be possible to meet or speak with you about your job? I know it would be helpful to learn more about what event planning involves for professionals in the field.

Thank you for considering my request and for joining the Tufts Career Networking Group.

Thank you,  
Your Name



## Referral

Subject line: Referral from (Name)

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

(Name), my Psychology professor, has encouraged me to get in touch with you to learn more about your work at (Organization Name). I'm interested in nonprofits and in particular, those related to mental health counseling. I read your biography online and I would like to learn more about your transition from client services to development.

I wonder if it might be possible to meet with you at your convenience? I know I would benefit from hearing about your experiences. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

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# Sample Networking Emails

## Referral

Subject line: Referral from (Name)

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

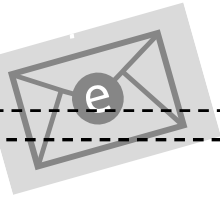
(Name), my Civil Engineering professor, has encouraged me to get in touch with you to learn more about your work since graduating from Tufts last year.

Civil engineering has interested me since my sophomore year in high school. As I prepare to declare a major, I'd find it helpful to speak with you about your course work at Tufts and your new position at (Company Name).

Would you be willing to speak with me briefly by phone?

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Your Name



## Follow-up

Subject Line: Follow-up from Tufts event

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

Thank you for coming to Tufts last night and participating in "How to Land a Job in Media." I'm happy to hear your encouragement about careers in print journalism. I have a few follow-up questions about your experience working for newspapers and magazines. Would it be possible to arrange an informational interview to meet with you for 20-30 minutes?

I've enjoyed the classes I've taken through the Department of Communication and Media Studies and would also like to ask your advice in planning my curriculum for next year.

Thank you for your visit to Tufts. I hope we'll have another opportunity to meet.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

## Thank you

Subject line: Thank you from Tufts student

Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name),

I learned a great deal about Simon & Schuster in our conversation yesterday and it affirmed my interest in pursuing a publishing career. I especially enjoyed hearing about your graduate studies in publishing at Columbia. Thank you for sharing your advice and experience with me.

I plan to contact (First Last Name) for information about her experience at (Company Name). Thank you so much for this referral; I'm eager to learn more about the production side of the business. I'll keep you updated on my progress.

I appreciate your assistance and your willingness to be part of the Tufts Career Networking Group.

Sincerely,  
Your Name

### Important Reminder:

These emails should serve as a *guide* for your networking communication and *should not* be used in "copy and paste" messages. Be aware that many alumni will recognize the emails from this packet, especially if they receive more than one message using the same text. This lack of originality and research on the part of the writer creates a negative impression. More importantly, you'll find greater success with messages that are written in your voice and reflect your efforts to tailor the correspondence to your reader.

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# Sample Networking Questions

The following are some questions that you might ask in an Informational Interview. Select a dozen or so that would be most helpful for you; do not expect to ask *all* these questions. Remember: use this opportunity to gain useful information that's not available online.

## Career Questions

- ▶ Which jobs and experiences have been most helpful in preparing you for your current position?
- ▶ Would you describe your tasks or projects that require creativity? (Substitute a skill or interest of yours. e.g., analytical thinking, quantitative aptitude, relationship building)
- ▶ Which particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job?
- ▶ How would you describe your environment and the people with whom you work?
- ▶ From your perspective, what are the challenges of working in this field?
- ▶ Which college courses and activities have proven most valuable in your work?
- ▶ How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
- ▶ What obligations does your employer expect of you outside of the work week?
- ▶ How has your job affected your lifestyle?
- ▶ Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about your field?
- ▶ Are there trends or changes in your industry that you foresee?
- ▶ How does a person advance in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
- ▶ How does your employer support your professional development?
- ▶ What other types of organizations hire people to do work like yours?
- ▶ What kinds of experiences would you encourage for someone pursuing a career in this field?
- ▶ Will my education prepare me for a job in your field? If not, how can I improve my candidacy?

## Job Search Questions

- ▶ How did you go about finding your job? (if you're speaking with a recent graduate about an entry-level job)
- ▶ Which strategies would you recommend for getting a job in your field?
- ▶ Which skills are the most important to highlight during my job search?
- ▶ Which criteria would you recommend for evaluating employers?
- ▶ With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research?
- ▶ *If you feel comfortable and it seems appropriate:* Would you mind taking a look at my resume?

## Reminder: Two Golden Questions

- ▶ If you were in my position, with an interest in \_\_\_\_\_, what steps would you take today?
- ▶ Based on my interest in \_\_\_\_\_, who else should I be talking to?

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