



Professional Networking

UMassAmherst | Isenberg School
of Management

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Isenberg School of Management

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Networking Overview

What is Networking?

Networking is the act of interacting with other people to gain information and develop contacts and connections with the purpose of furthering your career. Sending emails, speaking to people over the phone, and meeting in person are all considered networking. Contrary to popular belief, it is not a one-way street. While you might not have much to offer when you first start networking as a student or young professional, it is also an opportunity for you to share your experience, expertise, and time in order to help others.

Why Network?

Networking is a crucial skill to learn if you want to be successful in business. Developing these relationships will not only teach you more about the career paths in your industry of focus, but it will also help you establish relationships that will further your recruiting efforts. Additionally, networking provides you with opportunities to hone your social skills and practice speaking formally with professionals.

Purpose of This Guide

This guide aims to outline the essentials necessary to network efficiently and effectively.

Types of Relationships

Professional Contacts

Professional contacts are people who you have contacted to learn more about their company or job responsibilities. They are not people you will be reaching out to often and keeping updated on what is new in your life beyond your career. Instead, the goal of these connections is to have them assist you with your recruiting efforts at their firm, such as giving you the contact information to other people they work with or forwarding your resume along when you apply to their company. After initially reaching out to these people, follow up with them every 6 to 8 months unless instructed otherwise; therefore maintaining them as a warm connection. Reconnect with these contacts as their firm or the firms they are assisting with you begin opening their application cycles.

Personal Connections

Personal connections are people who you have reached out to and developed a personal relationship with. They are willing to devote more time to helping you, and you can discuss topics with them outside of business and your career. You can ask them for introductions and occasional favors, but be respectful of their time so to avoid becoming a nuisance. If you have any significant new development in your life such as an important interview coming up or new position that you landed, let them know about it. Follow up with them every 4 to 6 months otherwise.

Mentors

Mentors are the most valuable type of networking relationship. These people have taken you under their wing and are personally invested in seeing you succeed professionally. They are willing to devote the most time to you and often will draw upon whatever appropriate resources they have in order to help you out. While you still need to conduct yourself in a professional manner, you can be more casual with these people and ask them just about anything (within reason). A true mentor will be willing to talk to you whenever you need them, provided that they are not occupied with work or other personal matters. Always keep your mentors apprised on new developments in your career. If you do not connect regularly, follow up with them every 2 to 3 months.

Networking Strategies

Everyone has a different networking strategy. Some people are more comfortable with the process and do not mind speaking to a large amount of people, while others would prefer to only contact a few. Additionally, some industries require more networking than others. It is important to determine which strategy works best for you based on your personality and career aspirations.

Mile Wide, Inch Deep

Some people prefer to cast a wide net by having as many people in their network as possible. This type of network is going to consist primarily of professional connections and will require more effort to find new people to reach out to. The main benefit of this strategy is that the more people you speak to, the higher your probability that one of them will stick and eventually help you to land a job somewhere. The main disadvantage of this strategy is that corresponding with this many people requires a significant amount of time and it can be difficult to maintain that many contacts.

Inch Wide, Mile Deep

Other people prefer to have less connections but make “every single one count.” This type of network has more personal connections and mentors that you will contact more frequently. The primary benefit of this strategy is that each connection gained will be willing to invest more time and energy into helping you. Additionally, they will often vouch for you more than any professional contact would. The main disadvantage is that you have fewer provided opportunities and a narrower network to draw upon when needed.

Stay Organized

Regardless of network size or chosen strategy, it is crucial that you stay organized throughout the process. The easiest way to do this is through meticulous tracking. For example, create an Excel spreadsheet in which you track of all the people you have spoken with. Update this spreadsheet daily as you continue to network so that it serves as an accurate reference tool.

Where to Begin

Networking can be very intimidating when commencing the process. To take some of this pressure off, it is best to start with the “lowest hanging fruit” (i.e. your most accessible contacts). These people will already share something in common with you and therefore are more inclined to respond to and help you. **These contacts are also the people you want to make your mistakes with. In doing so, you will be more prepared to successfully execute higher stake calls down the road.**

Family and Friends

If you have family or family friends that are in the industry you are interested in, leverage these connections as they are the most likely to respond to you. These people are usually already personally invested in seeing you succeed, so naturally they will be more willing to help you out. If you can't think of anybody, ask your friends and family if they know someone in the industry that they could connect you with.

People from Your Hometown

People who live in the same town as you are more likely to help you. If you are unsure of how to find these people, go to LinkedIn and search for your high school's name. Also search for any professional groups in your town.

Students at Your School

Reaching out to other students within the school you attend is one of the most underrated methods of networking there is. They have some of the most relevant experiences and advice because they recently completed the same recruiting process that you will experience and have a similar educational background. Through the [UMass Finder](#), finding students' emails is simple and straightforward. If you're struggling to find someone within Isenberg who can help you, ask the Chase Career Center, your professors, club leaders, or peers if they have any recommendations.

Alumni

Alumni are a great resource to leverage because most people want to see other people from their alma mater succeed. Recent graduates were in your shoes not too long ago and know the position you are in, and people who graduated in earlier years have more work experience and insight that they can share. When networking with these people, talking about your time at UMass is a great way to build rapport and break the ice.

Networking Process

Find Contacts

Figuring out who to contact is the first step in networking. The three main ways to find contacts are by word of mouth, networking events, and LinkedIn. If you are speaking to somebody and they mention someone they know who is working in a field you are interested in, ask them if they could make an introduction. You can also ask people you've previously networked with or any of the aforementioned groups of people. If you are at any events like career fairs, info sessions, conferences, academic competitions, or Isenberg alumni events and meet somebody there, ask if you can have their business card so you can stay in touch. Lastly, if you cannot find the people you are looking for through any of those mediums, the best tool at your disposal is LinkedIn.

Send Email

Once you've found someone you're looking to speak with and you have their contact information, the next step is to send them an email. The point of this email is to schedule a time to talk to them on the phone. Don't be concerned if you do not receive a response right away, which is often the case. Continue to follow up with them every week (no sooner) until they reply or make the decision that you should move on to another person.

Get on the Phone

After you've received a reply to your email, figure out a time that works for both of you to have a conversation. This phone call is your opportunity to learn more about what they do as well as to impress them. If you perform well on the call, there is a chance they will be open to speaking with you again or helping you out down the road. **It is imperative to send them a follow-up email later that day or the following day thanking them for their time, regardless of how young or casual they are.**

Meet in Person (Optional)

If you are close enough geographically and have the opportunity to meet the people you have been networking with in person, it is highly advised. By adding a face to your name, they will have a much better feel for who you actually are, which bolsters your relationship with them. Ask them if they're available to grab coffee or lunch with you next time you're in the city and see what they say. Even if they are too busy when you are actually in town, the effort is appreciated and duly noted.

Apply at Companies

Finally, as recruiting season begins you will start to see that your networking is paying off. Reach back out to your connections at the companies you are applying to and let them know that you will be sending in your application. Ask them for any advice in the interview process and see if they can forward your resume along.

How to Use LinkedIn

The Purpose of LinkedIn

Almost all business professionals will have a LinkedIn, which is a fantastic resource to learn more about their past experiences. Once you've met someone either in person or over the phone, send them a connection request. Some people have settings enabled that limits the people that can find them on LinkedIn to their 2nd or 3rd connections, so the more connections you have, the more people your searches will return. While there is an option to message people on LinkedIn, this isn't necessarily the best line of communication. Not everyone working full-time checks their LinkedIn frequently, so it is possible for your message to go unnoticed. On the other hand, people are required to check their work email regularly, so your response rate from contacting them there often times will be higher. Because of this, LinkedIn is most valuable as a tool for finding people that you can then email.

Finding People Using Advanced Search

The advance search function on LinkedIn is what makes it so effective. To conduct an advance search, start by going to the search bar and hitting **Enter** without typing anything in. From there, click on the **All Filters** button in the top right corner of your screen. This will open up a window that gives you the option to filter your search results by specific characteristics that will allow you to get as granular as you want with your searches. Adding University of Massachusetts Amherst and Isenberg School of Management will provide you with all the UMass alumni there are, and from there you can add certain companies, industries, and locations, among others.

Using LinkedIn to Find Email Addresses

Once you've found a person you're interested in speaking with on LinkedIn, next you want to email them. Sometimes a person's profile will list their email address in their bio or contact section, but this isn't always the case. In the event there is no address listed, your next step is to find their company's email format and apply it to their name. To do this, you can either do a Google search of **[Company Name] Email Format** or look on their website and see if you can find email addresses listed there. Once you've done that, verify that address is valid before sending your email using an email checker such as Email-checker.net. If the checker says it is a real address, proceed to send your email.

InMail and LinkedIn Premium

If you cannot find a person's email using the steps listed above or you would prefer to contact the person via LinkedIn, you can send them an InMail. If you're not already connected with the person, start by first sending them a connection request with a short note stating why you want to speak with them. Once they've accepted your request, you're able to send them an InMail message as you would an email. To bypass this, you can also use LinkedIn premium (30-day free trial available) which will allow you to send a limited number of InMails per month to people who you aren't connected with, as well as give you an increased amount of searches.

How to Write an Email

Keep It Short and Sweet

Now that you have found someone to reach out to and have their email address, it's time to actually email them. The key to crafting a robust email is being succinct and direct. If you write a verbose email, the receiver may disregard it because they didn't have the time or patience to read it. State only what is necessary to get them on the phone, and leave the rest of the information you want to tell them for your call.

Make a Template

When it comes to emailing, there is no reason to constantly reinvent the wheel. A lot of the emails you send, especially when reaching out and setting up phone calls, will follow the same format. Rather than writing a brand new email every single time, save yourself time by creating a template email that you make slight adjustments to in order to customize it to the individual you're sending it to. This template should include what year you're in at UMass, your field of study, any relevant qualifications they should be aware of (internships, organizations and other experiences of that nature), your purpose for reaching out, and a sentence about speaking with them on the phone. Examples for an initial reach out email and a follow up email can be found at the end of this guide. If your template isn't getting many responses, make some edits to it and see if your response rate increases.

Always Personalize It

The less obvious it is that you're using a generic email template the better, so another way to increase the response rate of your emails is to properly personalize them based on who you are reaching out to. It is important to state the reasons why you are specifically reaching out to that person rather than somebody else. This is typically based on their past experience or a commonality you share such as both going to UMass. If you do have something in common, try finding a way to mention that in your subject line. Remember to keep it professional if doing so.

Attach Your Resume

If you are confident in your resume, another way to increase your response rate is by including it in your email (**always as a PDF**). This is better suited when trying to make a professional contact rather than a personal connection or mentor, but can work for all three scenarios. In some cases, if they are impressed they may even forward your resume along without you asking.

Name Drop When Possible

Name dropping can be very useful when first contacting somebody because it establishes a connection between you and the other individual. If a connection of yours recommends you get in touch with someone they know, ask them if they're comfortable with you mentioning their name in your email. If they say yes, include that when reaching out. An example sentence could be "I received your contact information from [Contact First and Last Name], who recommended that I reach out to you to discuss [Area of Interest / Role]".

Follow Up Emails

You will not always get a reply to your emails on the first try. Don't take it personally, people are busy and sometimes they meant to reply but something came up and afterwards they forgot. Send a follow up email after 5 to 7 days reiterating that you would like to have a phone call with them. The point of this is not to annoy them, but to show the person you are serious about speaking with them and can be persistent. If they still have not responded after 3 follow ups, they probably are not interested in helping you, and it's time to move on to another person.

Reply to the Thread

Rather than sending a brand new email to someone every time, it's better to reply to the same email thread that you already have with the person. This provides them with context and reminds them of the previous correspondence you have already had. This is especially important when you are sending a follow-up email because it shows them that you have already made an attempt to get in touch with them.

Double, Triple, and Quadruple Check It

Often times the initial email you send someone is the first interaction the two of you have ever had together. While they won't really get to know you at all until actually speaking with you, they are still going to form somewhat of a first impression based on it. Because of this, it is essential that your email is free of all spelling and grammatical errors. These mistakes are easily avoidable and show carelessness on your behalf. Even if it isn't the first email you have sent to that person, still take the few extra seconds to look it over to ensure everything is written correctly (**especially their name**). It also never hurts to have a second set of eyes review your email when possible.

How to Conduct a Phone Call

Preparation

The first step to having a good phone call is doing your homework beforehand so you are adequately prepared. Do some research on the person that you are speaking with and familiarize yourself with their background. What school did they go to? Where do they work and what role do they have in that company? What is currently going on at their company? What did their prior work experience look like? These are all questions you should look into and be aware of before the call. After you've done that, it's time to come up with questions for them. You should usually have 5 to 10 questions prepared for them. Lastly, figure out what your "ask" is going to be for the call.

Use a Phone Call Log

The easiest way to be prepared for your calls and stay organized with who you've been speaking with and what was covered is by have a call log template you fill out. This template should include a section about the background of the person you are speaking with, questions that you would like to ask them, key take-aways from the call and for your "ask". You should also have a separate scrap section for notes you take while on the call. Prior to the call, you should fill out sections about the person's background and the questions you have prepared. Once you've finished your call, you should complete the take-aways sections and write down what your ask was.

Coming Up with Good Questions

When networking, you don't want to ask questions that could easily be answered through basic online research. This is a waste of their time and does not provide you with any additional value because you could find these answers on your own accord. You want to ask questions that are specific to them, such as their experiences, career decisions, and opinions / advice.

Recycle Questions

Once you've come up with a solid question that was well received on one call, you should take note of it and ask this question again on other calls. The people you speak with have no idea what you have asked others before on different calls, and while you may already know the answer, it will help the call go better which is the ultimate goal. It's also useful to get multiple perspectives on the same topic so you can form a well-informed, independent opinion.

The "Ask"

The "ask" is one of the most important aspects of a networking call. It is an action item that the person you are speaking with can do for you. Every call should have one, and typically it will come towards the end of the call. When you first start networking, this may be as simple as asking if you can reach out to them again down the road. As you get more comfortable with the person, it might entail asking them if they can review your resume, give you other contacts, do a mock interview together, grab coffee next time you're in their area, or forward your resume along.

Make it Conversational

The best phone calls are actual conversations with the person rather than question and answer sessions. This can be difficult to do when you first start having networking calls, but with time and experience it will become easier to do. One way to do this is by asking follow-up questions based on the response they give you. This shows you're engaged in the conversation and will help you find a natural flow. Another way is by giving your own opinion on the matters based on what they have said. Try to avoid using generic phrases like "that is very interesting" and moving on to the next question. Instead, try saying something like, "I find that interesting because..." and provide your reasoning. Or ask a genuine follow-up question in response to something they just said, if appropriate.

Be in the Right Environment

When having a networking call you always want to be in a quiet place with strong cellular reception and no distractions. It is recommended that you use headphones and stand up while talking. Headphones improve the sound quality and standing up helps your voice project better which will make you sound more confident.

Send a Thank You Email the Next Day

After you've had your call with the person, make sure to send a "Thank You" email the following day to show you appreciated their help. This email should include a short note thanking them for their time, referencing one or two things from the call, and reiterating the "ask" again. If you did not have an "ask" at the end of your call, then include one in this email.

General Tips

Ask and You Will Receive

Many people, especially personal connections and mentors, are willing to help you however they can. This issue is, they don't always know what they can do to help. Let them know what assistance they can provide (looking over your resume, giving you an introduction, mock interviewing, forwarding your resume along) and if they are comfortable with your request, they will do so.

It's Okay to Have a Bad Call

It's highly unlikely that every call you have will go well. Don't get down on yourself and stop networking just because you had a bad call. Focus on what aspect of the call didn't go well, learn from your mistakes, and work to improve on it during your next one. Worst case scenario, it was absolutely terrible, and you don't reach back out to that person and you move on to the next person.

Get a Sense of the Person You're Speaking With

Pay attention to the person you're speaking with and try to get a sense for who they are. If they bring up topics such as sports or their time in college, you should run with it and talk about that. If they seem like they are strictly there to talk about their company or the industry they work in, you should limit the topics of your discussion to this. This also applies to their energy levels. If they seem very excited for your conversation, feel free to be excited and animated yourself. If they are calm, relaxed or stern, you should tone down your excitement.

Stroke Their Ego

The main goal of networking is to have people like you. If they do, they are going to be more apt to lend you a helping hand with your career. To get people to like you more, keep them talking about themselves. It's human nature that people's favorite topic to talk about is themselves, so the more time you can get them do to that, the better they are going to feel about the call. That being said, you still need to make a good impression on them, so don't focus the entire conversation on them.

Demonstrate Genuine Interest in Their Career

It is obvious to the person that you're speaking with when you're sincerely interested in what is being discussed and when you are not. Show that you have a genuine interest in what you're talking about, and your calls will go much better. If you can't do this because you simply could not care less about the topic that is being discussing, there is a good chance that you're networking in the wrong industry and should focus on something that captivates you more. Often times your enthusiasm can impress someone just as much as your knowledge.

Set Aside Specific Times to Network

It can be difficult to fit networking into your already busy schedule. A good way to get around this is to set specific times or days each week devoted solely to networking. This way you will always know the times and days you're available when somebody asks, and it will provide structure to your networking that will ensure it gets done.

Remember, They Are Real People Too

It's easy to forget that the people you're networking with are real people themselves. While they may be older, more experienced, and highly successful, but don't let that intimidate you. Talk to them in a respectful, professional manner, but also treat them like you would any other human. This also means that you shouldn't just use them for help. The goal is to build a real relationship, not to just use them to further your career and drop them afterwards. This is why following up, staying in touch, and helping your contacts whenever possible is so crucial. Bridges go both ways.

Be Respectful of Their Time

Whenever somebody agrees to speak with you on the phone, they are giving up their own time that they could be spending on getting work done or their personal life. As a business professional, time is one of the most valuable things there is to offer. To show you appreciate this, be prepared for your phone calls and make sure you do all of the appropriate formalities like sending a follow up email afterwards. This also applies to making yourself as flexible as possible in scheduling a time to speak. These people are doing you a favor by talking with you, and they are very busy. Make sure they know you are willing to make time whenever is most comfortable for them.

Always Follow Up When Receiving Help

If you ask a connection for help and they were kind enough to take the time to do so, they want to stay updated. To show your appreciation, send them a follow-up email down the road. If they give you an introduction, once you've spoken to the person they connected you with, send the original person an email letting them know how the call goes. If someone does a mock interview with you, once you have the actual interview let them know how it went. This will make them feel better about themselves because they are able to see the impact that they made, and they will be more willing to help you out going forward.

People Love Seeing Progress

As you form these long standing relationships with your connections, it's important to show these people that you're making progress over time. While expectations may not be the highest when you first start networking, they will be set higher as you get older and more experienced. Showing that you're improving yourself and developing further in your career is an easy way to impress them. Additionally, if they give any recommendations or advice, heed to it and bring that up next time you speak with them. This will make them feel like their efforts have paid off and they will appreciate that you actually listened to what they said.

Be Your Most Professional Self

Even if someone you are speaking with acts casually with you via email / over the phone, always maintain a professional attitude. Each interaction or conversation you have with them is shaping the image they have of you, and you want to portray yourself in the best way possible. While it is important that you are able to pass the "airport test," they still need to be able to envision you in a business environment. Whenever in doubt, always err on the side of caution and be more formal.

Keep a Positive Outlook

Networking can be tedious and time consuming. Even though it's not always the most fun thing to do, the benefits it can offer make it well worth the energy. To make it a bit easier, take the perspective that each call you make gets you one step closer to landing the job that you want and building a potential lifelong friend or business partner down the road. This will help keep your spirits high so you can stay focused and not lose the will to continue grinding.

Give Back

There are many alumni who will open doors and provide advice to you throughout your career. It is likely that these people received guidance themselves from upperclassmen or other alumni. Once you are in a position to help others, you should consider giving back to the UMass Amherst / Isenberg community. Supporting students and younger alumni is a way to show your appreciation for the assistance you received, and it can be a fulfilling experience. Through continuing the cycle of Isenberg helping Isenberg, you are paving the way for future classes to succeed.

Email Templates

Initial Reach Out

Example 1:

Subject: UMass Student Interested in [Area of Interest]

Hi [Their First Name],

My name is [First and Last Name] and I am a [Year of Study] at the Isenberg School of Management where I am studying [Major]. This past summer I interned at [Company Name] where I focused on [Area of Focus]. I'm looking to learn more about [Area of Interest].

I am reaching out because [Specific Purpose for Reaching Out].

Would you have any availability in the upcoming week for a brief phone call? My schedule is flexible, so I can make myself available whenever it would be most convenient for you. Looking forward to speaking with you.

Best,
[First Name]

Example 2:

Subject: Isenberg Student Looking to Connect

Hello [Their First Name],

I hope all is well. My name is [First and Last Name], and I am currently looking into a career as a [Area of Focus]. [Connection's Name], recommended that you would be a great person to reach out to given your experience working in [Their Industry].

I am heading into my [Year of Study] this Fall, and I am currently interning with [Company Name] as a [Area of Focus]. If you have any availability in the upcoming week, I'd love to hop on the phone for a quick 10 - 15 minutes to discuss your experiences at [Company Name]. I understand you're busy so I would appreciate any time that you can spare.

Please let me know what time works best on your end if you are available anytime before the Fall starts. Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,
[First Name]

Follow-Up

Example 1:

Hi [Their First Name],

I wanted to follow up to see if you would be free to chat with me at some point in the near future. My schedule is flexible, so I can make myself available whenever it would work best for you. I will also be making several trips to [Their City] in the upcoming weeks and could meet you for coffee if it would be easier to fit in your schedule. Hope we can figure something out.

Best,
[First Name]

Example 2:

Hi [Their First Name],

I hope you had a nice weekend. I am still interested in learning more about the [Area of Focus] at [Their Company], and I would appreciate an opportunity to speak with you if you can fit it in your schedule. I'm free anytime this week that works well for you.

Best,
[First Name]

Thank You Emails

Example 1:

Hi [Their First Name],

Thank you for speaking with me on [Day of the Week]. It was great getting to hear more about yourself and the various teams you've worked on within [Company Name]. I really appreciate your offer to connect me with some of your former colleagues, and I have attached my resume to provide them with a bit of my background.

I will stay in touch and let you know how my recruiting goes.

Best,
[First Name]

Example 2:

Hi [Their First Name],

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me yesterday, it was great getting to learn more about yourself and your experience in the [Their Industry] division at [Company Name]. I'm happy to hear there is [Reference to Conversation] and [Reference to Conversation]

I appreciate all of your insight into the internship program and your advice on my resume. I've already made the changes you recommended. Could you please share the contact info for the head of HR like we discussed?

Best,
[First Name]