

Networking & LinkedIn Guide

UMassAmherst

Isenberg School of Management
Chase Career Center

A GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Networking is about building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships, and connecting with people who are willing and receptive to being helpful – and offering yourself as a resource. At its core, networking is the exchange of information, ideas and support.

Ideally, networking is a “win-win” where both parties benefit. For job seekers, the benefits are not always equal nor immediately apparent. Networking takes practice and effort, but can yield significant results and open up incredible opportunities.

In-person networking occurs at recruiting events, corporate information sessions, receptions, work-related events, professional meetings, conferences, and seemingly random places where you meet new people. Networking also occurs online via email, LinkedIn or other social media.

Potential networking connections include:

- Undergraduate Advisors and Chase Career Center Coaches
- Faculty and department chairs
- Fellow classmates and alumni
- Immediate supervisors (both past and present)
- Family, friends and neighbors

Faculty and staff are an important part of your network and can be influential in connecting you with recruiters and alumni. Approach networking with faculty and staff with the same formality you would an alumnus or recruiter. Show them you understand the etiquette required when connecting with those to whom they refer you.

Effective networking requires you to be friendly, personable, open, confident, flexible, persistent and resilient. In order to make networking work for you, you must be proactive, conduct research, and understand and leverage the power of follow up!

In-person Networking

Approach individuals and introduce yourself professionally. Break the ice with small talk to make you both comfortable and to get the conversation started.

Approach “open” groups where people are facing outward to some degree, as it will make joining the conversation easier. “Closed” groups are those who have their backs facing out and appear to be in close conversation with one another. Wait for the group to open up, and introduce yourself.

When appropriate, introduce people to each other. Pay attention to the conversation so your introductions can include information about each person to get the conversation started in a positive manner.

If you have made a connection with the person and wish to be able to follow up, you may ask for a business card. This can be a signal that you will be moving on to another conversation and can be communicated in the following manner “I’d love to follow up with you in the next couple of weeks. Would you mind sharing your card with me?” You may also offer your own card to the individual. If desired, ask to call and the best number to use. Savvy networkers will make a note on the back of a card to remind themselves of some detail related to the conversation, which will then become the opening for the next communication.

When leaving a conversation, be courteous and respectful. It is perfectly fine to say something like “It has been nice speaking with you and learning about X. I’m going to go talk with several more people and look forward to another opportunity to connect with you!” Don’t feel pressure to ask everyone for their card.

Online Networking

Reaching out to professionals you have no connection to can be intimidating. To increase your chances of success, leverage your network by joining alumni networking groups on LinkedIn and Connect UMass, connect with faculty and staff, and do your research.

Be thoughtful and strategic about who you approach, and don't send the same cover letter you sent with your application. Research the position and know what you have to offer, and initiate the connection only if you are a good fit. In order to elevate your request, familiarize yourself with the company, industry and trends, volunteer for a project or offer your assistance with a specific initiative.

Follow-up

Be proactive and follow up within 24 hours! This is a real opportunity to make an additional positive impression, show strong communication skills and move the relationship forward. You'll set yourself apart by taking this action as many people who network do not follow-up and lose valuable potential resources!

Don't take it personally if people don't respond or a new relationship does not become significant! The more people you meet, the broader your network will become, so focus first on people you know, ask for referrals to their network and continue to branch out.

Keep your networking contacts organized using a system that works for you. Track types of communication, interactions, dates and next steps, and remember, practice makes perfect! Networking is an essential skill that opens doors, in both your professional and professional life. Take a deep breath, push your fear aside and start building your network today!

Examples of Networking Requests:

Good morning Mr. Smith,

Thank you so much again for taking to time to speak with me at the Oracle Networking Event in November. It was great to have a chance to hear about your background in Marketing Analytics. In fact, learning about some of the deals you worked on has further heightened my interest in this unique field.

When we spoke, you mentioned that if I was ever in Boston to let you know and we could possibly grab some coffee. If that offer is still open, I would like to take you up on that, as I will be in Boston in early January and would love to have an opportunity to chat with you more about your background and how you got started in your field. I will be in the city January 7-11th, so if you have any availability during that time, please let me know.

*Thank you,
Jackie Stelman*

Dear Mr. Houston:

Kim Figueroa, Internship Director at the Isenberg School of Management's Chase Career Center, provided me with your email address. I am a freshman interested in accounting and am seeking to learn more about careers in managerial accounting. Ms. Figueroa mentioned that you had significant experience as both an internal auditor and comptroller with a couple of manufacturing companies. She also indicated that you might be a tremendous resource for me.

If you are able to find time, I would like to set up a 30-minute meeting with you to do an informational interview to learn more about your career.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your reply.

*Sincerely,
James Kenney*

UTILIZING LINKEDIN FOR NETWORKING

LinkedIn is the world's largest online professional networking site, including over 443 million professional profiles and executives from each of the Fortune 500 companies. Since 94% of recruiters cite LinkedIn as a primary recruiting source, you definitely want to take advantage of the opportunity to display a strong profile that will attract their interest in your candidacy. With over 18,000 Isenberg alumni profiles listed, LinkedIn is an invaluable tool you can use to make connections and begin building your professional network!

Build a Strong Profile

Before you begin making connections, be sure your LinkedIn profile is 100% complete and professional – you only have one chance to make a first impression!

Don't simply cut and paste your resume

Your LinkedIn profile should build upon and supplement your resume, not be an identical copy. If a recruiter reviews your resume and is intrigued, they will then access your LinkedIn profile. In order to be perceived as relevant, savvy, and someone who takes initiative with regard to their professional network, a LinkedIn profile is a must-have for any job seeker. The recruiter should learn even more about you from your profile, leading them to feel even more compelled to contact you regarding their opportunity. Once your LinkedIn profile is published, remember to update it frequently as you acquire skills, experience and accomplishments.

Select Isenberg School of Management as your current institution within the Education section

Be sure to select "Isenberg School of Management, UMass Amherst" as your current educational institution, rather than simply "University of Massachusetts Amherst." The Isenberg School of Management has tremendous name recognition and you definitely want to take advantage of this growing prestige! Listing Isenberg as your institution will also ensure that you and your fellow Isenberg alumni are able to connect consistently and easily.

Include a photo with your profile

According to LinkedIn, profiles with photos are 14 times more likely to be viewed. It is not always necessary to spend money having your photo taken professionally, however, your photo should appear professional. Avoid blurry photos, avatars, and obvious selfies! It should be a simple head shot (shoulders up) of you:

- Alone – not with your dog or significant other
- Dressed in business professional attire
- Unadorned – do not wear hats or sunglasses
- In a neutral setting – not at the beach, the club, or a wedding

Write an interesting headline

What does *not* constitute an interesting headline: "Student at the University of Massachusetts" or "Student at the Isenberg School of Management." These headlines may be accurate, but they are also generic and won't distinguish you from your peers in or outside of Isenberg. Your headline should include keywords that highlight your career interests and biggest professional strengths, so you grab the recruiter's attention and appear more often in candidate search results. Examples of strong headlines include: "Data-Driven Isenberg Senior Seeking a Full-Time Opportunity in Digital Marketing" or "Analytical UMass Operations Management Major Pursuing Summer 2018 Manufacturing Internship"

Include a compelling summary

Your summary, which normally appears directly below your LinkedIn "snapshot" (the box with your photo and headline), is one of the best ways to command the reader's interest and express yourself as a compelling candidate. Think of it as a written version of your 30-second elevator pitch where you concisely market yourself as a valuable professional resource.

Ideally, your summary should provide a glimpse into who you are as a person. Write in first person narrative in order to give a sense of your voice and personality. Lead with an interesting "hook" or story about how you first became

interested in your major in order to catch the reader's attention. Separate your content into very short paragraphs in order to make it less dense and more readable, and don't be afraid to be creative!

Write your work experiences in first person

To reiterate, do not simply cut and paste your resume bullets into your work experience section. Like your summary, your work experiences should be written in first person narrative style in order to lend your own voice to the content. You should still emphasize your biggest accomplishments per job as you do on your resume, but on LinkedIn you can provide a more interesting account of exactly what you achieved, why it was important, and the challenges you faced along the way.

Customize your vanity URL

Each LinkedIn profile is assigned a unique URL that allows it to be accessed when entered into a web browser; yours can be found directly under your profile photo. Instead of allowing it to remain a randomly-assigned combination of numbers and letters, be sure to modify your vanity URL to something simpler and more memorable – ideally, some variation of your first and last name. This update will make for a more attractive vanity URL to include in your email signature, on your resume, or on a business card, and ensures recruiters can quickly access the qualifications of the right person.

Use keywords

Research which critical keywords are found consistently in job descriptions for the positions in which you are most interested, and be sure to include those keywords in your profile. Don't just include them in your Skills section; sprinkle them multiple times throughout your profile to increase the chance that it will be found via a recruiter's keyword search.

Request recommendations

Another advantage of a LinkedIn profile is the ability to embed one or more professional recommendations that can be immediately accessed by a recruiter. Your goal should be to have at least one or two brief recommendations from immediate supervisors or professors who can attest to your skills and strengths.

Join groups

LinkedIn boasts approximately 2 million different groups that have been organized around various careers, professional interests, organizations, and industries. One of the biggest benefits of joining a LinkedIn group is that your membership provides you with the means to reach out to and connect with every other member of that group – this exponentially broadens your networking reach and ensures your credentials are reviewed by the greatest number of people possible.

How do you decide which other groups it would be beneficial to join? Try reviewing the profiles of alumni currently working in positions you admire, and scroll down to the bottom to see in which groups they are involved. Or, do an advanced group search on your desired topic, and the results will be sorted by the number of members currently in your network. Note, however, that you may not be able to join every group you're interested in – some are "locked" and only allow individuals who meet specific criteria to join (ex. *current* investment professionals).

Search for Isenberg alumni working in your desired industry/at your desired company

Use the advanced people search function (at the very top of your screen) to identify Isenberg alumni who currently work, or have worked, in your desired industry. Simply enter "Isenberg" into the school field and then select your desired industry. You can also use this strategy to search for alumni working at a specific company or those residing in a particular geography. You may ultimately decide to reach out to a few of these selected individuals to request an informational interview, which in turn will advance your knowledge and help grow your professional network.

If you are unable to identify Isenberg alumni working in your desired industry, remember that you can also search for *UMass* alumni (which is obviously a much larger pool).

Even if you are still a current student, you should immediately join two important alumni groups:

- Isenberg School of Management, UMass Amherst, Official Alumni Group
- University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst Alumni

Personalize your request to connect

When you select the option to connect with someone, LinkedIn will offer you the opportunity to enter a short, personalized message with your connection request – always take this opportunity! Writing a personal message not only demonstrates that you have expended some degree of effort on your request, but it helps the other individual to remember exactly how they know you and why she should accept your request to connect. The tricky thing is that LinkedIn allows you a maximum of only 300 characters for this note, so this initial reach-out must be very concise:

Dear Mr. Smith,

I'm a junior Marketing major at Isenberg exploring a career in PR. I admire what you've accomplished in your role at McGovern Public Relations and wonder if you might be willing to speak with me briefly about your experience in this industry. Thank you for considering my request.

*Sincerely,
Melissa Salva*

Request an informational interview, but *never* a job!

When attempting to network with someone new, it is considered inappropriate to directly ask for a job or internship. Rather, your focus should be on building a personal relationship and learning as much as you can that might positively impact your career development or job search.

It is, however, very appropriate to request a brief informational interview where you ask a prepared list of questions designed to advance your knowledge about a specific position, industry, or an individual's own career path.

In some cases, the person to whom you're speaking will be impressed enough by your preparation, thoughtful questions and communication skills that they will ask you for your resume afterward. In that case, you may definitely send it.

Always end your informational interview by expressing your sincere gratitude and asking if there is anyone else in their network they feel it would be beneficial for you to speak with, as this will allow you to continue growing your network with each meeting.

Connect with recruiters as appropriate

LinkedIn's advanced people search functionality makes it easy to identify recruiters, and even university relations staff members, at specific companies. But should you attempt to connect with them? If you have already met the recruiter at an on-campus event, you may certainly extend an invitation to connect. If you have not actually met the recruiter but you have a genuine interest in the company and are reasonably qualified for an opportunity there, then feel free to extend an invitation to connect – but definitely personalize your connection request and ensure that your LinkedIn profile is flawless and error-free (it reflects on you as strongly as your resume). Companies and recruiters may differ in their policies around whether or not to accept an invitation from someone they do not technically know – so don't be insulted if your request is declined or ignored.

Remember that networking is a two-way street

A solid networking relationship involves give and take and is mutually beneficial. Keep this in mind and be sure to reach out to members of your network whenever you identify a potential opportunity to help them. For example, you may forward a helpful journal article or recommend an excellent speaker from a recent conference.

Be grateful and follow through on any commitments you make

You never know when your paths will cross, or when that individual will be in the position of helping you professionally, so express your appreciation, follow through, and pay it forward!