

## Why You Need to Network

Networking serves as a crucial part of the job search process. According to US Labor Department statistics, **85%** of people are hired as the result of networking or some other type of referral or personal contact. However, networking can also be used for other purposes, such as career exploration or advancement.

## How to Start Developing Your Network

**Identify who you know.** The best place to start is with the people who are already in your life. Create a list of people who know you and whom you believe would be willing to offer you advice and assistance. Consider the following people when composing your list:

Family Members  
Parents of Friends  
Classmates

Colleagues of Family Members  
Internship Supervisors  
Fraternity/Sorority Members

Friends  
Current/Former Professors  
Student Org Members

**Get on LinkedIn.** LinkedIn is intended specifically for professional/business networking – it offers people with similar professional interests, backgrounds, and skills the ability to connect online and exchange information, recommend peers, make referrals, discuss topics of professional interest, share job leads, and offer or seek advice. It also makes it easier to stay connected with your current contacts if they are on it too.

**Connect with alumni.** You share a common bond with UT alumni – you are all members of the Longhorn family! Many grads are more than willing to assist a current student or recent grad with their transition into the professional world. A couple of ways you can connect with alumni include:

- Becoming involved with Texas Exes ([texasexes.org/membership-benefits/students](http://texasexes.org/membership-benefits/students))
- Utilizing the LinkedIn Alumni tool ([linkedin.com/alumni](https://www.linkedin.com/alumni))
- Joining the Moody LinkedIn group ([linkedin.com/groups/3450289](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3450289))

**Be active in professional and civic associations.** Joining and participating in your field's professional associations keeps you in regular contact with your professional peers and gives you an opportunity to make new contacts (Note: some professional associations offer student memberships at a discounted rate). Likewise, being active in civic organizations, non-profit associations, or church or other groups provides you the opportunity to connect with others who share your personal interests outside of your professional field.

**Contact people of interest.** Your network doesn't have to be limited to people with whom you have a previous relationship or some kind of established link. Sending an email to someone interesting whose work you admire or who you saw on LinkedIn, heard present on campus or at a seminar, or were referred to by a friend is an excellent way to expand your list of contacts. Not sure what to say? Here's an example:

Dear Mr. Herder,

*My name is Ima Longhorn, and I'm a student at the University of Texas at Austin studying Journalism. I'm reaching out because I noticed on your LinkedIn profile that you are a staff writer at the Monthly Stampede. I'd love to learn more about your experiences as a writer and hear any advice you may have for someone who would like to break into the field of magazine journalism. I'm sure you're busy, so even 20 minutes would be appreciated. Thank you so much.*

Ima Longhorn

## How to Use Your Network

There are a number of ways your professional networking contacts can be utilized. You can:

- Gather information about a job or career area you are considering;
- Seek advice on how you can best prepare to enter or advance in your field/profession;
- Ask for assistance entering or advancing in your field/profession; and
- Request referrals to others in the field/profession that might be valuable contacts.

A useful method to accomplish any of the above is the **informational interview**. For more information on conducting an informational interview, see our *Guide to Informational Interviewing*.

## How to Sustain Your Network

**Nurture your relationships.** Professional relationships, like personal ones, require attention and care to remain strong. A contact with whom you have built good rapport and communicate regularly is far more likely to provide advice or assistance when you need it than a contact with whom you rarely interact. You don't need to be "close friends" with a contact or speak to them every day, week, or even month to keep the relationship strong. Check in with them intermittently to see how they are doing, not just when you need something. If you see an article or website you think they may find interesting or useful, forward them the link with a note. And if they reach out to you, always reply promptly.

**Never ask for a job.** A contact can be many things to you – colleague, advisor, mentor, reference – but the one thing they are not is your personal job placement specialist. You should not directly ask a contact for a job or inquire whether the contact has of any openings at their company. Moreover, you should not ask a contact to accept or distribute your resume. Treating your contacts merely as a means to an end is the quickest way to lose their trust and support. Instead, ask for advice and information that will assist you in your search. For example, *"I would appreciate hearing your advice on career opportunities in the public relations industry and conducting an effective job search."*

**Make gratitude your attitude.** You want to be appreciated when you lend a helping hand, right? So do your contacts! If you make a request of a contact and they follow through, always respond with a display of gratefulness. This could be a thank you email or note or possibly a gift. A contact who doesn't feel appreciated for their efforts will not likely want to help you again.

**Follow the "Golden Rule."** Your network is not a one-way street. Your contacts may also reach out to you for guidance, assistance, or information. Treat them as you would expect to be treated if you were in their position. Respond promptly to their requests and be generous (but reasonable) with your time, knowledge, and resources. They will most likely be more than happy to return the favor down the road.