

# NETWORKING GUIDE

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## NETWORKING FACTS

Fact: Approximately 70% of all jobs are found through networking

Fact: 60% of all jobs openings are never advertised.

Fact: The best way to learn about job openings is to talk to lawyers practicing the kind of law you want to practice

Fact: Students who network find jobs much more easily than those who do not

Fact: Networking is the most powerful job search technique in existence.

## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is simply meeting people, gathering information, and developing a relationship. As law students, you are entering a new profession. In order to know which aspect of the profession you might want to pursue, you will need to meet lawyers who can give you advice, perspective, mentoring, introductions to people and sometimes job leads that will help you throughout your career. Networking is not so much about who you currently know, although that helps – it is about whom you meet and with whom you develop a relationship. All facets of your life can be enhanced by developing a strong network – getting solid recommendations about good restaurants, real estate agents and doctors, for example, or figuring out how to get good tickets to a big game or concert can be much easier to do if you have a network of contacts you can go to for advice. Networking can take place anywhere – in an elevator, airplane, a law school event, at a bar association meeting – anywhere two people are talking and building a relationship. The topic of the conversation is not as important as building rapport and establishing a level of trust and credibility.

## WHAT NETWORKING IS NOT

The act of networking can have a bad connotation because there are people in the world who do not network correctly. Schmoozing, pressing the flesh and working a room are not networking. **Asking for a job is not networking.** Never, ever ask for a job when you are networking. It is the fastest way to end a conversation because most people you meet will not have a job to give you. What they will have are their expertise, time, ideas and information, which may lead to a relationship and to the possibility of a job somewhere sometime in the future. Meeting with an alum to gather information about that alum's career path and practice area is networking and you should begin to hone this skill during your first year at Loyola.

## WHY YOU SHOULD NETWORK

Distinguishing yourself from other applicants is essential to obtaining an interview. It is not unusual for a law firm to place a job announcement on an internet job site and within days have hundreds of resumes from that single posting. Career counseling professionals estimate that almost 60% of all jobs that are filled never get advertised – no newspaper or internet ad, no placement on a company website, no professional recruiter or headhunter, no career fair. So – how do people learn about these opportunities? Current employees of the company often tell the people who have networked with them when a position is opening and/or help them get interviews. All this occurs before the company advertises the opening.

Consider this from the employer's perspective. If you were a hiring manager at a law firm and had several trusted employees, would you spend thousands of dollars advertising an associate position, sift through hundreds of resumes, conduct several hours of interviews, and then hire someone you do not know with the hope that this new person will be a model employee. Or would you rather interview candidates referred to you by trusted friends and colleagues who have put their reputations on the line by referring candidates to you – their boss.

## HOW TO NETWORK

Before you start any undertaking, you need to prepare by taking care of some basics. If you were to take a road trip this weekend you would pack a bag, fill your car with gas, take out money from the bank and even buy a map. The same holds true with networking; you need to be prepared.

### Developing Your One-Minute “Elevator” Speech

You are in an elevator and happen to strike up a conversation with a lawyer standing next to you. Can you quickly give a one-minute speech that will let the person know who you are and what your career interests are? If you have not developed this one-minute speech, it is critical that you create one and get good at communicating it. By developing a one-minute “elevator” speech, you will sound like someone who has a plan, knows what they want and you will make a good first impression and increase the likelihood of making a new contact. A good one-minute elevator speech includes:

1. Relevant background information: education and experience
2. A summary of your career interests
3. A question about the lawyer’s practice area or career path

For Example:

*I am a second year law student at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. I am a child law fellow and hope to practice in the area of family and child law when I graduate in 2011. I did a summer internship this past summer at the Public Guardian’s office and now work at Nadler, Pritikin, & Mirabelli. The internship allowed me to advocate on behalf of children in child custody cases. At Nadler I am doing legal research and writing on divorce, child custody, adoption and elder law issues and have gone to court on several cases with the lawyers in the firm. I would like to use this experience to practice as an associate in a family law firm after law school.*

### Networking Steps

#### *Resume*

Be sure to have your resume reviewed by your career counselor in case one of your contacts requests it.

#### *Research and Find Common Ground*

Before contacting anyone, begin by assessing your personal network. Think about all of the people you know (friends, family, classmates, former employers or co-workers, community figures, acquaintances from your place of worship, past or current faculty, etc.). Let the people in your network know about your interests. Ask them who they might suggest you talk with to learn more about the field you are interested in. Contacts are often very willing to provide information and share their expertise with others for the asking. You will find people enjoy discussing themselves and their work, especially with novices in the field. Beyond your own personal network, there are numerous resources that will help you expand your network. Join bar associations, read legal newspapers, magazines, and journals about the going’s on in the local legal community, talk to faculty members, check out Martindale.com and Lexis/Nexis and Westlaw’s career websites. Then scour organization/firm websites for bios on the attorneys. Find a Loyola grad or a graduate of your undergraduate institution. Look for an alum in the city you hope to move to. Talk to the Office of Career Services for ideas. Look for someone you have a connection to. They are more likely to share their time with you if you have something in common.

#### *Create Your Correspondence Asking for an Informational Meeting*

Create an email message or write a letter asking for a 30 minute informational meeting with a person you hope to network with and have your counselor review it for content and tone. The informational interview is one piece of the “job search strategy puzzle.” It is part of a research process, one in which information and contacts are gathered from people who are already working in target positions or organizations. It is an excellent method of conducting market research. The structure of the informational interview is one in which **you** ask the majority of the questions and direct the course of the discussion, as opposed to the job interview in which you are answering questions about yourself.

## WHY DO INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS?

- To research job market information
- To find out about career paths that you did not know existed
- To help clarify, define, and re-define your interests and goals, gaining self-awareness through the process
- To prepare for job interviews – the more comfortable you become meeting with attorneys to discuss the legal profession, the less stress you will experience when you interview for positions in the legal profession
- To get first-hand information and impressions from people who know the ins and outs of the profession
- To get leads on jobs and/or other information interviews
- To learn about professional organizations and publications which may be helpful to you in your career
- To build confidence in your ability to discuss your career interests, strengths, and goals
- To discover whether your strengths and personality would be well suited to a specific career
- To become a more impressive job candidate by learning what is important to employers
- To expand your professional network and become known by the “players” in the field
- To develop skills that will serve you throughout your professional life

### What Your Correspondence Should Contain

Your connection to the contact: state that you are a Loyola law student or a graduate of your common undergraduate school (or whatever connection you have to the person).

### State Why You Are Contacting Them

Because, for example, they have a tax practice and you are interested in learning more about it or because they practice in a four attorney firm and you are interested in learning more about small firm practice. For example: “I really want to learn more about your tax practice and the career path that you took,” or “I’d really appreciate any advice you would have for a student interested in family law and how to best market myself in a down economy,” or “I’d love to get your thoughts on the firms in Chicago that are doing the best work in your area of law.”

Example telephone call and email script:

“Mr. Jones, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a 1L/2L/3L at Loyola, and I was given your name by \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that you practice in the area of \_\_\_\_\_, and I am very interested in learning more about that field. I’m looking for some general information and wonder if you might have 15 minutes for me to drop by your office. I’d love to hear your advice and ideas for a student in my position.”

Or, you can send an email along the lines of:

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am a 1L/2L/3L at Loyola, and I was referred to you by Professor \_\_\_\_\_ when she learned of my interest in tax law. I’m very interested in the field, and would love to get your insight on how to make myself most marketable to firms with a strong tax practice. If you could spare 15 minutes for a brief meeting in your office or a phone call at your convenience, I would appreciate the opportunity to get your best advice for a student in my position. Please let me know if there is a convenient time to reach you, and I will follow up by phone next week.

Sincerely,

Susan Student

**Follow-Up:**

Follow-up via a telephone call within 72 hours to try to schedule a meeting.

**Be Prepared To Talk When You Call:**

When you call, your contact may answer the phone and say “I have 10 minutes right now, let’s talk” so be prepared to have the conversation right then. Prepare a list of questions to ask about their practice, their firm, their career path, how they see their practice changing and developing in the future, what types of classes and internships they would recommend, etc. Make sure your resume is updated and proofread so you can provide it immediately should they request it. Otherwise, ask your contact when it would be convenient for you to meet them at their office. All correspondence, whether in letter or email format, must be professional, grammatically correct and typo free. Proofread!

**WHAT TO DISCUSS IN AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

Your goal is to gather information which means you need to be prepared to ask your contact questions. In other word, it is up to you to direct the discussion. Your goal is to acquire basic information and impressions about work responsibilities, lifestyles, working conditions, educational and experience requirements, etc. Remember that the informational interview should be a low-stress, enjoyable conversation.

Introduce yourself and establish a climate of relaxation through “ice-breaker” types of conversation (mutual contacts, the weather, the office environment). Express your appreciation that the contact is taking time to talk with you. Recognize that their time is valuable and that you don’t want to take up too much of it. Continue to develop rapport by asking the contact to tell you about their position, their personal career development, and their likes and dislikes about the field.

**Suggested Questions to Ask Your Networking Contact**

Design your questions by first considering what you want to know. Your first informational interviews may be fairly general. As the search continues, you will ask more sophisticated questions about how to find a job in a particular market. Any of the questions that follow will provide you with useful information:

- Can you describe a typical day in the office – do you have typical days?
- How did you become interested in this area of the law?
- What part of your job provides the most challenges?
- What motivates you to continue despite the difficulties of this field?
- What changes have you seen in your practice area over the years?
- What do you believe the future holds?
- Are there any lifestyle considerations I should be aware of?
- If you could start all over again, would you choose the same path?
- Are there any personal attributes which you feel are crucial to success in this field?
- What kinds of coursework, additional training, and practical experiences will make me most marketable in your field?
- What do you think of my experiences to date? Am I an attractive candidate? If not, what would make me more so?
- Are there any professional organizations or publications that I should look into to learn more about the field?

End the interview with expressions of thanks for the contact’s time and candor.

As you near the end of the discussion, say, “You have been very helpful, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me. Is there anyone else in Chicago you would suggest I talk to about practicing family law? May I say that you suggested I call?” Ask for permission to stay in touch to inquire about new developments and future leads.

## **Always Say Thank You**

After calling or meeting your contact, send a thank you note or email right away. Explain how much you appreciate the referrals and let them know that you'll be in touch from time to time.

## **Evaluation and Follow-Through**

An important final step is the evaluation of the information which you have gathered, and following up on any leads that you have been given. Ask yourself the questions: What positive and negative impressions do I now have about the practice area/setting? How did this interview help me to clarify my career objectives? What more do I want to learn about this practice area/setting? What are my next steps? After each informational interview, you should also make notes about your conversation to follow up on each lead and suggestion you were given. If you were given additional names of attorneys practicing in the field – follow up with them! It would be embarrassing for a contact to let a friend of theirs know that they referred “a really terrific Loyola 2L” to them – and that really terrific Loyola 2L never bothered to call. If a contact suggested groups to join or publications to read, make sure you check them out. Following up on the suggestions you were given will also create opportunities to get back in touch with your contact to say thank you – for a personal referral that turned into a job offer, for a book recommendation that you found particularly helpful in your job search, etc.

## **CONTACT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Keep track of the people with whom you network by using Access, Excel, a three-ring binder or note cards. Record your contact's name, contact information, employer, notes, follow-up, date of last contact.

## **ETUQUETTE AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- Make at least three contacts per week during the semester. Remember that looking for a job is like taking another class so set time aside each week to conduct your search.
- Many of your networking contacts will have tight schedules, do not demand too much time.
- Professors can be an important link on your network chain – talk to them about their area.
- Do not ask for a job or internship – just ask for information in order to build the relationship.
- Follow-up promptly on referrals.
- Contact people by their preferred method of contact – don't try to get around it.
- Prepare a telephone script and proofread your email before making contact.
- Don't give up – you may need to try 2-3 times to reach the contact.
- Be confidential – don't share sensitive information the contact shares with you.
- Keep your relationship with your contact alive by periodically checking in and updating him/her.
- Send your contact a thank you card or letter to let him/her know how their counsel has been valuable.
- Networking is a two-way street – if you see or read information your contact might find useful, share it with him/her.