

What is Networking & Why Should You Do It?

Networking is tapping into your connections for helpful information or advice to achieve your career goals. By definition, it means to develop contacts and exchange information with other people for purposes of developing business or expanding one's career opportunities. If done thoughtfully and with intention, networking can be the most effective career exploration and job search tool. Networking can happen through intentional outreach, informally as the opportunity presents itself, or at structured networking events such as career fairs, conferences, and meetups.

According to multiple online sources, **85% of jobs** are filled via networking with personal and professional connections. In fact, according to [CNBC](#), 70% of jobs are never published publicly. These jobs are either posted internally or are created specifically for candidates that recruiters meet through networking. Though it's possible to get a job or internship by simply sending your resume to prospective employers and postings, companies get thousands of applicants, and it's hard to stand out in a sea of competition. Networking allows you to make meaningful connections that can help you navigate the process and get noticed.

Where to Start Networking

To begin, you must identify who can help when it comes to seeking career-related advice. Anyone can be a networking contact! It may be a parent, a Villanova alum, a co-worker, a roommate's parent, a faculty member, a recruiter you meet at a career event, or other individuals you know from your social, work, or educational environment. The purpose of connecting with each person is to see if these individuals can share information and advice regarding their career path as well as refer you to more contacts.

IDENTIFY:



The information you are looking for

Would you like to know information about a specific position or perhaps learn about a particular industry/company? You'll need to be able to tell the person you are speaking with what you are looking for.



People who can help you

Research and think of people who are doing what you want to do/might be interested in. Are there any relatives, friends or neighbors who work in a certain industry or could refer you to someone they know? Ask past employers, professors, and university staff members to see if they know individuals that you could talk to.



Activities/organizations (on and off-campus) you belong to

Are there people associated with these activities that could be of assistance to you in building your network? They can be a great link to resources and a valuable source of information.

Villanova Resources to Aid in Networking:

- [NovaNetwork](#) – Villanova's official social and professional networking platform.
- [LinkedIn Alumni Tool](#) – Search and connect with alumni on LinkedIn by company, location, industry and more.
- [Career Connections](#) – The bridge that links you to high-quality career education content, including networking resources and industry/identity-based connections.
- [Handshake](#) – Villanova's platform for jobs, internships, events, and employers allows you to find in-person and virtual networking events, employer contact information, and network with others who have worked at companies of interest.

Career Conversations with Working Professionals and Alumni

A career conversation, also known as an “informational interview,” is an opportunity to speak with a working professional to ask question(s) about their profession, career path, and more. It is common in the working world to conduct these career conversations with individuals who currently have jobs you think might be a fit for you – now or in the future. Reference page 1 for a list of resources that will enable you to connect with Villanova alumni and other working professionals in various industries.

Why Pursue These Career Conversations?

The overall goal of a career conversation is to learn about the person's job, career path, industry and organization as well as share information about yourself and your career goals. If the person you are speaking with asks how to be of assistance to you as you explore career options, it is okay to ask for advice on identifying summer internships/job opportunities or to ask for comments on your resume. **However, it is not appropriate to ask for a job directly.** The goal of this type of conversation is to build trust and establish a supportive network for the future. Career Conversations *can* open doors to job and internship opportunities, but only if approached in a measured and professional manner.

What Type of Questions to Ask?

As opposed to formally asking a set list of questions, try to treat the interview more like a conversation. This will help with relationship-building and make the experience more comfortable. However, don't be too casual going into the discussion; you should still formulate questions you want to ask and have a sense of what information you want to come away with. Below are some possible questions to help guide the conversation:

- What is your educational and professional background?
- How did you get from Villanova (if alum) to where you are now?
- How did you prepare yourself for this career path?
- What do you like/dislike about your job and why?
- How did you decide to get into this industry and what steps did you take to land your first job?
- What should I do to best prepare myself for a job in this industry? Are there certain classes, skills, or experiences I should pursue to help prepare myself?
- What suggestions/advice do you have for someone wishing to enter this industry?
- What skills and background are needed to be successful in this career?
- What are the tasks you do in a typical workday?
- What are some challenges you experience on the job?
- What are the most significant changes and challenges facing your industry/organization/role?
- Are there professional publications or organizations that I should become familiar with?
- Knowing what you know about your industry, would you go into it again? If you weren't doing this, what other careers would you pursue?

TIP: As you conclude this career conversation, ask if the person can recommend additional professionals for you to connect with to help you explore further. This can provide you with additional contacts to expand your network and develop more career champions within companies/industries of interest.

Following Up with a Contact

Always follow up your conversation with a thank you email, letting the contact know how much you appreciated the time spent with you and the information shared. If the contact mentioned something that really caught your attention, you can say how valuable that piece of information was to you. This is a nice way of letting the contact know that you connected with what was discussed. If they provided you with advice for next steps, reinforce your plans to follow through on their suggestions. If you haven't already, connect with them on LinkedIn and/or NovaNetwork, which will allow you to stay in contact moving forward.

Still Have Questions?

Schedule an appointment with the Career Center [via Handshake](#) or call 610-519-4060. We can help you with networking, identifying contacts, and how to prepare for conversations with working professionals.