









Seeking a New Career or Advancement

Preparing Your Resume

Job Searching and Professional Networking

Interviewing

-  **Reading:** Getting Interviews through Networking  
10 min
-  **Reading:** The Interview Process  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Interviewing at Different Types of Companies  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Developing an Elevator Pitch  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Asking the Interviewer Questions  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Answer Questions with the STAR Method  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Interview Warmup  
10 min
-  **Reading:** Negotiating the Contract  
10 min

On the job

Preparation

Once the conversation is on the calendar, it's time to prepare. Remember, your focus should be on learning about your target role at the company and determining the best ways to connect to new opportunities. Things you'll want to focus on include:

- What is the day-to-day like in the role? What is the team structure, how are priorities decided, what do they like about their work, and what do they struggle with?
- What skills and experiences do the hiring team look for? What is essential, and what is nice-to-have?
- Do they think your skills and background are a good fit for the role, or are there ways you can improve your candidacy through education or experience?
- What is the best way to monitor and apply for opportunities? Is there anything coming up that is not yet posted on the careers page?
- Are there any other people they can recommend that you speak with?

To inform your questions, you'll want to conduct thorough research on the person you are speaking with, the company they work at, and your target role. Consider the following sources of information:

- **Your contact's LinkedIn profile, and any information it links to.** Look for information to inform your questions as well as anything that can help you build rapport, such as shared volunteering interests, hobbies, school experience, etc.
- **Job descriptions for your target role at the company** (if available). During the conversation, you'll have an opportunity to clarify requirements and responsibilities.
- **LinkedIn profiles of people working in your target role at the company.** You want to understand their skill sets and backgrounds to get additional insights into what it takes to succeed in this role.
- **Company website.** You should have a good understanding of the company's mission, business, and anything else they chose to highlight to the public.
- **Company reviews on platforms such as Glassdoor.** It's a great idea to see what people are saying about the company, so you can ask more specific questions about the culture.
- **News about the company.** Just in case there is something significant happening at the company, you want to be aware of it.
- **Company careers page.** Make sure you know which roles are currently posted so that you can ask about the status, and about applying to them directly.

Step 4: Speak with your new contact

Speaking with strangers does not come naturally to many people. If you are feeling uncomfortable before or during your first few conversations, that's completely normal! It will get easier with time as you develop the invaluable skill of networking.

Remember that the other person is also going into a conversation with a stranger (you) and might not know what to expect. To make both of you comfortable and to help build rapport, be ready to set the structure for the conversation.

- **Remind them about who you are, why you reached out, and what your goals are for the conversation.** By this point, you will have done extensive research in preparation for the conversation, but your new contact might not have had the time to look at your profile and doesn't know why exactly you reached out. Help them out by starting with a brief overview of your background and the reasons for the conversation.
- **Monitor time.** Conversations like this generally last 15–30 minutes. Make sure you respect the other person's time by keeping the meeting to the length you had originally agreed upon, unless the other person wants to continue talking.
- **Make it about them.** While you are there to learn, the person you are speaking to is being generous with their time, and it's your responsibility to make them feel valued and appreciated. Explain why you wanted to talk to them and show the research you've done. Honest praise and genuine engagement go a long way.
- **Listen more than talk.** Since you are there to learn about their experience and company, the primary focus of the conversation should be on the other person. Some people might be more talkative, while others may need more input from you in order to engage. Ideally, they should be speaking for 50% to 80% of the conversation. Don't be afraid of short pauses, and be respectful and patient if they need time to gather their thoughts.
- **Take note of action items as you go along.** There are many action items that can come out of a conversation like this: you might need to send the other person your resume, they might offer to connect you with someone else, either one of you might want to share articles or resources that come up in the conversation, etc. It's your responsibility to keep a record of these action items, so you can follow up on your promises and make it easy for the other person to remember theirs.
- **Close the conversation by clarifying what's next.** Thank them for their time, summarize what you have learned, and go over any action items from the conversation. The goal is to make the other person feel useful and appreciated—after all, they've been generous with their time.

Asking for a referral

Getting a referral is an ideal outcome for a networking conversation. However, not every conversation will end in a referral. Sometimes, there will be no role available or the person might not be open to referring you for a variety of reasons. Make sure not to take this personally or push too hard. Their reasons may have nothing to do with you specifically. It's important to respect their boundaries and comfort levels. It is also important to go into the conversation without the expectation of a referral. Focusing on learning about the role and getting advice from your new connection will take the pressure off you and them.

If, during the course of the conversation, you confirm that there is a role available that you are qualified for, do consider asking for a referral. You should be able to sense from the conversation whether the person thinks you could be a valuable addition to their team and therefore open to referring to you. If you have any doubts about that, provide an easy way for them to say “no” to you to avoid an awkward situation. For example, you can ask, “Would you be able to refer me to this role, or do you recommend I apply online?”

If your contact agrees to refer you, make sure you understand exactly what's required from you. Depending on the company's system, you might need to apply through a special referral link, have your contact submit your resume internally on your behalf, or apply online and then have your contact reach out to the relevant member of the hiring team.

Step 5: Follow up

Always send a thank-you email within a day or two to the person who has been generous enough to share their time and expertise with you. Go beyond the basic “thank you” and reinforce the connection you've made by:

- Reiterating what you have learned
- Following up on your action items from the conversation. Include any materials you had promised to share and list out what else you are going to do based on the conversation (make sure to follow up on those as well when the time comes!)
- Gently reminding them about any action items the other person had volunteered for
- Offering to repay the favor by sharing any information that might be valuable to the person, or offering to connect them with people in your network

Sample thank-you note:

Some conversations naturally lead to ongoing relationships where people find a lot in common and naturally stay in touch, while others don't create enough rapport to solidify the connection. Even if your conversation falls into the second category, as long as you feel that you'd like to keep this person in your active network, there are actions you can take to develop the connection over time. The key to developing your new connection is finding natural touchpoints moving forward. For example:

- **Share updates on your job search.** Follow up on any advice from the conversation once you have a chance to act on it. Your connection will appreciate that you valued their guidance and will be glad to know if it helped. Also, remember to update and thank them once your job search is complete.
- **Send interesting information as it comes up.** If you come across an article or information that reminds you of the person, it is a great reason to send them a quick note.
- **Engage on LinkedIn.** If your new connection is active on LinkedIn, commenting on their posts and updates is a great way to continue the conversation.
- **Add them to your celebrations calendar.** Add them to your holiday mailing list. In addition, if any important dates, such as a birthday, come up in the conversation, make sure to mark your calendar and send your congratulations.

Do be mindful about your rate and volume of outreach, as you don't want to overdo it. Make sure to establish a pace that feels right for the relationship.

Continue Growing Your Network

You now know how to find, reach out to, and develop relationships with people who can help your job search through insider information. Not every conversation you have will result in an immediate job lead, but many will. Networking is the most reliable way to get interviews, and it's available to everyone with a LinkedIn account, effective strategies and some grit.

Don't be discouraged if you don't feel great about your first few conversations, or if they don't result in referrals. It is normal to feel uneasy about speaking with strangers, particularly at first. It's a skill you need to practice. Each conversation you have with an industry professional is a win. You are building one of your most valuable professional assets—your network—one person at a time!

Mark as completed

 Like  Dislike  Report an issue