1.

Activity introduction

You recently created profiles on LinkedIn and Behance. Now, explore how you can start building your professional network online and in person, and the ways you can find a mentor to help you on your UX career journey.

Networking can be a great way to make meaningful professional connections and gather information about the job industry you want to enter. It can take a more professional form, like attending conferences and industry events, or one that's more social, like reaching out to relatives and old teachers. Utilizing your online network of connections can open doors to potential job opportunities, or introduce you to industry professionals who can offer you expert advice. To give you a better sense of how to build your network, in this activity we will be discussing:

How to reach out to your professional connections

Best practices for contacting your network

How to conduct an informational interview with a mentor or industry professional

Best practices when interviewing your professional connections

How to keep track of your network contacts

By the end of this activity, you will know how to start building your professional network and how to make the most of your connections.

Step-by-step instructions

Practice your networking skills by following the instructions and best practices listed below for each of the activities.

Reach out to colleagues and friends

A good place to start establishing your network is to pull from the connections you already have. It's very possible that someone who is already in your network could offer some valuable advice or even help connect you to other professions within the industry.

Step 1: Create a list of potential connections

Determine who you can contact for advice in your career journey.

Some people who you may want to include:

Past teachers or counselors

Previous employers and coworkers

Relatives and friends

These people will serve as a starting point for establishing career-centered contacts who can help you navigate the industry and, when you're ready, the job market. You never know who may have a connection that could be of value to you, so think broadly.

Step 2: Make initial contact

You can network with these connections either in person or online through platforms such as LinkedIn or Behance.

Say hello and reintroduce yourself if it's been awhile

When networking online, send a message on a networking platform or by email

Save time by drafting a general inquiry message you can tailor to each individual person

Step 3: Share your career goals
Once you make initial contact, tell them about your career goals and what you've been working on so far. Provide context to your situation to help guide the conversation towards:
General career advice

Introduction to one of their contacts who is familiar with your field

Step 4: Follow up
Once you have connected with someone, keep track of the last time you spoke with them, and make sure to follow up every couple of months. And don't forget to always thank them for their time and support!
Keep a conversation going so when they come across an opportunity you might be interested in, they think of you.

Best practices

When contacting individuals who you may know already, stick to these guiding principles:

Do your homework. Go into your discussion with an understanding of the person's job history, where they currently work, the position they hold, and what their organization does.
Ask open-ended questions. When it comes to making a professional connection, it is important to let the person with more experience and industry knowledge talk. Take this as an opportunity to learn about their experiences and ask if they have any advice for you.
Offer assistance. While we recommend that you don't outright ask for a job, you could consider offering to assist them as well, such as a freelance opportunity or helping them with a small project.

Set up informational interviews
Whether you have a professional mentor or you are just starting to build a network of UX Design connections, it is important to actively seek out knowledgeable professionals and gather information. Your goal is to gain more insight into the UX Design field. Conducting an informational interview is a great way to build your network and gain further insight into the field. The following steps are recommended:
Step 1: Set a date, time, and meeting location
After making initial contact with someone within your network with knowledge about UX Design, set a date and time to meet with them to discuss career options and goals. Let them know that you are available to meet in person or virtually at their convenience.
Keep in mind that for meetups like this, a virtual meeting can often be the easiest for both you and your contact.
Step 2: Prepare questions and points for discussion
Go into the interview prepared by writing out questions you want to ask and other points you would like to discuss. This will allow the conversation to flow easier and will help you feel more prepared going into the interview. Some topics to bring up might include:
. Advice on how to find your first UX design job

. How to develop specific skills or learn a new tool

. Feedback on specializing in a type of design or being a generalist designer

Step 3: Set expectations
Once the interview is wrapping up, make sure you express your interest to stay in touch. If they are willing, set up a time to meet regularly, like once a month, to fill them in on your progress and revisit your goals.
Step 4: Follow up
After the interview is complete, send them a thank you message either by mail or electronically. The goal of the meeting was for you to gather information, and chances are they gave you plenty of advice to think about. Tell them how valuable the discussion was to you and remind them of your interest to stay in touch.
Best practices
Have clear goals in mind. Go into the interview with a sense of what you want to get out of it. You want to gather information, but determine what you need clarity on.
Ask for feedback. Consider sharing your portfolio and asking your mentor or interviewee to give you feedback. Be clear about the kind of feedback you need and what your goals are. Sharing work with others regularly can help you focus on what you need to improve on, as well as help you recognize your strengths.

Keep track of your network
Although it's not necessary, if you're working hard to build your network and make new connections, it can be really helpful to have a way to keep track of all the people you are meeting. We suggest using a spreadsheet to keep track of your contacts.

Step 1: Access the template
To use the template for this course item, click the link below and select "Use Template."

Link to template: contact list template↗ .

OR

If you don't have a Google account, you can download the template directly from the attachment below.

🔗 Google UX Design Certificate - Contact List [Template]
XLSX File

Step 2: Add to your contact list
As you meet with your connections, spend some time filling in the details of the spreadsheet for each person. Keeping this list updated will be especially helpful for you to use when you start the job search! It will be so much easier to have all of your contacts in one place where you can easily decide who to reach out to, for what kind of help, and how to reach them.