On Campus - Issue 23

Networking nitrogen

“Successful networking can make a difference between having the career you want and having a job.The best way to get a job now is the same as in the ‘70s and the ‘80s — word of mouth.”

— Adam Cobb, Professor of Management, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

*Networking is an important tool that can open the doors to opportunity. It is about making and building relationships, not just about making connections.*

***Why is networking important?***

Studies show that 60 - 80% of all job offers are the direct result of networking. The job market is tough, and who you know can make the difference in getting the job that you want. Networking is an important tool that can open the doors to opportunity. Networking is about making and building relationships, not just about making connections. Here are some tips to help you learn how to network like a pro!

***Stand out from the crowd with your Elevator Pitch***

First impressions are made in as little as seven seconds and are often what makes or breaks the impression that others will form of you. The secret to leaving a positive first impression is having a powerful introduction, which is an important tool in your arsenal when meeting new people. The very best introduction you can have is a well prepared elevator pitch.

When planning an elevator pitch, remember that it should be an engaging, memorable, authentic, and relevant way to introduce yourself in 60 seconds or less. Your goal is to help the listener understand your key attributes and interests, and leave them wanting more.

A good elevator pitch should be:

1. ***Brief.*** Keep it 60 seconds or less
2. ***Easy to understand.*** Avoid jargon
3. ***Compelling.*** Show your passion
4. ***Relevant.*** Make it appropriate to the event, the person and your goals
5. ***Differentiated.*** Share what is different about from others
6. ***Authentic.*** Should be a true reflection of who you are. It should include a window into your values (what’s important to you/what motivates you); your passions (what truly energizes you) and your purpose (what are your bigger picture goals for the future?)

Creating a strong elevator pitch will help you soar above the rest at campus events, career fairs, and in any other social setting you may find yourself.

***Give and take***

The art of networking is treating it like a two way street – you need to make sure that there’s a “give” and a “take” in the interaction. Showing interest in what the other person has to say will make them more interested in listening to you. One of the main goals of networking is to find a human connection that can spur a memorable conversation. Sharing interests and passions can help form connections and open the doors to a deeper conversation.

Regardless of your talent or your resume, you will encounter situations where the challenges you face will require the help and collaboration of others. Having those strong connections and understanding of other people will help you and others overcome challenges.

***Plan ahead***

Networking is a planned and ongoing effort. You set goals, develop strategies for achieving them, take action, evaluate how well your plan is working, and make changes as necessary. It is something that you will need to do throughout your career. Set networking goals to help push yourself out of your comfort zone. Strive to meet new people at events and not just stay in a group of friends. It is much easier to only talk to those you know, but that will not help you expand your network. Do your homework; know your audience and who you want to meet. Make sure to arrive on time and dress appropriately for the situation. If you are going to a career fair or a company hosted event, make sure to do research ahead of time so you are prepared.

***At the event***

When you get to an event, have a plan. Don’t just talk to people you know, branch out and make new connections. Remember to make eye contact; don’t look around when you are talking to someone. Offer a firm handshake and use your first and last name. Take a genuine interest in what others are saying, don’t dominate the conversation and only focus on yourself. Ask questions and listen to others.

Networking can happen anywhere, anytime and under a variety of circumstances, formal or informal. The key is to find ways to build relationships and make meaningful connections that can help you throughout your career. Be prepared for all networking situations to help you soar to new heights.

For more tips on effective networking, visit PwC’s personal brand experience.