NETWORKING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS
The "ABCs - Always Be Connecting"

There are many different **technical roles** that require an understanding of software. Nearly every industry requires a software developer at some point in the life cycle of the product or service. Don't worry if you don't know what role in the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) is right for you and don't worry that you haven't identified what industry or companies you want to pursue yet. In fact, this naivete is to your advantage as we consider how to explore these unknowns.

Networking has proven to be one of the most effective parts of the job search strategy. We'll discuss all the myriad ways of networking in our future career strategy workshops. However, in this assignment we'll focus on a piece of networking called, **informational interviews**- a meeting with someone working in an industry, company, or role that you are interested in learning more about. It is NOT a formal job interview, but rather an opportunity to build relationships with a person whose expertise, insight, and connections could inform and guide your job search.

Linkedin has over 500+Million users (about 50% are active monthly users and 40% are daily users). This is a huge resource to research professionals in roles, at companies, within different industries that you are interested in. Take advantage of Linkedin's 300 characters to send a personal message to connect and grow your network with the intent to secure informational interviews.

- Copy use this **job tracking** sheet to help you stay organized.
- OR use this free Website: **huntr.co**

INITIAL OUTREACH MESSAGE IDEAS

"Hi __, I love music and see that you are a developer at ABC music company. I'm an aspiring software developer currently exploring this industry to see if it's the right path for me. It would be awesome to join your network and learn from your experience and expertise."

"Hi __, I noticed that you graduated from a bootcamp! I'm super inspired by your journey since you completed your bootcamp. It's awesome to see your success and would love to connect and be a part of your network"

"Hi __, I found your profile while I was researching about ___industry. I'm currently a student learning software development and trying to understand the industry more to see where my interests/skills align best. I'd love to connect with you and learn from your experience and receive your expert mentorship/advice."

"Hi __, I came across your profile on Github and impressed by some of your work. I think you have a really interesting career background and wanted to connect on Linkedin and be a part of your network."

" Hi_, I'm a software developer and will be relocating to LA in a few months. I'm growing my network with professionals and working to build a new community in this city. After reading about your interesting career journey I'd love to connect and be a part of your network."

TIP: *Don't share that you are job searching in your initial outreach or that you want to talk about job searching.* **YOU ARE BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP--don't treat it as a business translation.** Approach your initial message wisely--try to identify something that connects you to the person of interest (i.e. shared interests, same university alumni, shared friends, a news story you read about them or their company, their github repository, their personal website, former colleagues, other bootcamps alumni). Leverage that you are currently a student--people are much more likely to be a mentor and support to students.

Send out as many messages as you can--only 50% of users are active on Linkedin. Secure as many informational interviews as possible. if people connect back then send out a follow up message asking for an informational interview. Don't just look at friends/family' go beyond and find connections from companies/industries/job roles you are interested in across the SDLC.

[Additional Message Ideas](#)

FOLLOW UP MESSAGE & ACTION ITEMS | WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THE CONVERSATION?

Accepting your networking request on LinkedIn is the first step it's important to follow up after you've connected on Linkedin and send a short message to anyone that accepts your connection. Thank them for accepting your request, tell them why you were inspired to connect with them, then ask if they might have time to chat via video (zoom, google hangouts, Facetime, Coffee Shop).

Don't expect your interviewer to know what to talk about. Have a strategy and steer the conversation, but approach it from a place of learning where you are seeking mentorship, advice, and industry insight.

Talking points for Information Interviews:

- I'm relocating to X city, are there tech groups, companies, industries, or events that you suggest I research?
- What's a typical day as a software developer (*or whatever job title they have*) at his company?
- What tools/resources do they use to help with their code/programming (and tools/resources for their job search)?
- Do they have recommendations for projects that would look impressive to their (and broadly any) technical hiring teams?
- What was their job searching strategy like?
- What is the recruiting process at his/her company like (ask about technical interviews and questions)?
- Does the company offer remote work, apprenticeships, internships, or have referral programs?
- What skills in their experience do new hires/new developers lack that you could be working on to make you more competitive?
- What skills or experience should you highlight in your resume? (if you don't have it-- maybe you build a project to reflect that skill?)

- What should a junior developer expect in the first 3 months, 6 months, 1 year?
Always leave your meetings with a "Call to action" in other words, Don't leave conversations without highlighting next steps.

Here's some examples of next steps:

- Now that you know me and my interests a little more; is there someone else you might recommend that I reach out to or speak with in your network?

- I'm sure you have a really interesting network. If I spot someone in your network that is doing something that I'm interested in; is it okay if I ask you to introduce me?

- I'd like to keep an eye on jobs at your company. I don't see opportunities that fit what I'm looking for now but in the future if a vacancy comes up could I reach back out to you for a referral?

- Would you mind giving me feedback on my resume and or projects?

- Are they still connected to anyone from their previous company (especially if it's a company you're interested in)

- Would they be interested in staying in touch as a mentor for future reference to personal projects?

Keep in mind the ABCs "Always Be Connecting." There are many ways to network (tech events, Meetups or even riding in an Uber). As a job seeker always be on the lookout for any door of opportunity and this can mean actively building your own doors. Networking can feel awkward. Sending the initial outreach can feel really intimidating. You might send hundreds of messages with no responses-this is normal. Don't give up. Your informational interviews are not meant to impress with your coding knowledge--instead its a chance for you to impress people about who you are as a person and potential colleague.

Here's a great TechTalk with Jon Khaykin, a Senior Software Engineer at Affirm. He has shared some great job searching strategies as well as stresses the importance of networking and sending message: TechTalk w/Jon

Here are the template messages that Jon shared with us from the TechTalk: Sample Cold Outreach Emails