

"It's Who You Know"

1. Finding Connections



- Cast a "wide net" (See Chart)
- A 25-30% response rate is normal.
- The bigger and broader your initial contact list the better.
- Utilize a contact tracking system.
- Can take significant time and effort.
- Can be challenging to get started. Focus on 2 or 3 "warm contacts" in order to learn the approach and process.
- This is a skill that takes practice!

2. Initial Approach



- Unless you set up a time to speak by phone – in advance – don't call alumni!
- Very busy people; best to email first.
- Do not send same email to each person in company.
- Be professional. Address with appropriate titles.
- Do not mention networking.
- Recommend not attaching resume to approach email. Include in confirmation email.
- Do not ask for a job.

Cold Connections

Company Websites /
Google Searches / LinkedIn
Professional Associations /
Chambers of Commerce

Referrals

Contacts provided to you
by your existing
connections

Vanderbilt Connections

VUConnect /LinkedIn /
Doreways / Faculty/ Student
Groups /Fraternity & Sorority /
Volunteer Groups/ Info Sessions
Event Speakers / Older
students / Vanderbilt Magazine

Personal Network

Friends / Relatives /
Family Friends / Neighbors /
High school / Summer
Programs/ Faith
Community / Civic Orgs

3. Email – Brief and Polite



(100 Words or less)

Subject Line

- *Really important* and often gets overlooked
- Very short and makes immediate connection

Salutation

- Dear Mr. / Ms. - if you do not know well or someone more senior
- Possibly use first name with young professional

Background and Connection

- Name and year/major at Vanderbilt
- Connection [Referral, shared interest, etc]

Why you've contacted them

- Interest in industry/career path
- Show you've done your homework through research or speaking with others
- The more specific the reason the better

The Ask

- Acknowledge that they are busy professionals
- Suggest a brief 15 min call and provide availability

Closing



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4. Phone

- Be politely persistent in scheduling a phone call via email.
- Minimum of 5 days between attempts.
- Be courteous of their time. Adhere to the set time for the meeting.
- Research the industry and company
- Know yourself. Who are you? What are your interests/skills?
- Speak clearly, listen closely, and take notes.
- Ask good questions. (See opposite →)
- Do not ask for a job.
- Always close asking them for additional contacts.
- Thank them for their time.

5. Interview Reflection

Immediately following the meeting ask yourself the following:

- Did I get the answers to questions I needed to have clarified?
- What did I leave out?
- What new questions do I have?
- Do I need to speak with more people to obtain a more objective opinion?
- Do I need more in depth industry or company research?
- What ideas for future career strategies did I obtain?

PREPARATION -- POLISH -- PERSISTENCE

6. Follow Through and Up

- Send an intro email to the additional contacts you were given within 48 hours.
- Follow the same steps as original contact.
- Send brief personalized thank you after the conversation within 24 hours.
- Continue process with every contact.
- If appropriate, ask to meet in person.
- Maintain key relationships through strategic follow up.

Questions to Ask

Prepare 3-5 questions about the person's role, company and career strategy. The more research you do, the more specific questions you can develop.

- What is the culture of the firm?
- What specifically do you do in your area? Describe your day.
- How did you get to where you are now? What was your path?
- What specific skills, work experience or educational background can make me more competitive for a *(position name)*?
- What are the backgrounds of other employees in your department or company?
- What surprised you about your job? What do you most like or dislike about it?
- What challenges and opportunities are associated with the position?
- What does *(breaking news, policy, research insight, etc.)* mean for your company?
- If you could give only one piece of advice to a young person seeking a career such as yours, what would that advice be?
- Based on our conversation today, who else would you recommend I talk to? Would you mind if I follow up with you with additional questions?