

Networking & Informational Interviews

Networking and Informational interviews are great tools to establish professional contacts and introduce yourself to members of the industry. It can lead to connections and even opportunities for securing a job or internship. Other benefits include:

- Exploring industries and career options.
- Identifying key players in the industry.
- Learning about job and internship opportunities.
- Receiving professional tips, advice, or help on projects.

Networking is essentially building relationships and connections to other professionals. Informational interviews, a form of networking, are an excellent way to build your network and gain valuable insight into a company or career path. It's a chance to get insider information and make connections that may help you in the future with your career.

How to Start

- Develop an elevator pitch or story to introduce yourself in networking situations.
- Establish a list of contacts or connections you would like to meet and places or events you can attend.
- Research industry trends and hot topics so you can contribute to industry conversations.
- Remember, building a network is not only about making connection but providing your expertise or help to someone too.

Tips for Success

- Organize your networking by keeping your connections updated by following up quarterly to tell them about your successes and follow up on any previously discussed topics to show engagement.
- Be professional: don't treat networking opportunities like social outings.
- Make a great first impression and articulate what makes you unique so that you'll be remembered.
- Always follow-up on networking connections: connect via LinkedIn or send a thank you note, when appropriate.

Networking Opportunities

- Attend EPICS' panels, workshops, and other events to connect with professionals and colleagues.
- Attend university-wide or alumni events, which are usually open to students.
- Check-in with former employers or internship sites.
- Connect with professors and ask them to recommend networking opportunities.
- Join a professional organization - many will offer student memberships and networking opportunities.

Finding Someone to Interview

- Connect with Northwestern alumni: [Our Northwestern](#) is NU's alumni database. Search for alumni by company, region, degree, and occupation.
- Leverage your networks: former supervisors, professors, classmates, family, and friends. See if they can connect you to someone who can help you explore an industry, company, or potential career.

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn Alumni Tool: Search for alumni of Northwestern on LinkedIn by where they live/work/ what they studied/their profession/skills.
- Explore your connections' contacts and ask for an introduction. Join professional groups or [NU's Alumni Group](#). Research alumni and their professional work history through LinkedIn to give you an idea how you are connected to the company and individuals at that company.

Tips for Informational Interviews

- Don't ask for an internship or job. First and foremost, remember the point of an informational interview is not to ask for an internship/job but to explore the individual's career path/organization and to build connections with individuals.
- Be considerate of their time and schedule. If you ask for 30 minutes, make sure you keep it at 30 minutes. Ask them if they would rather speak with you via phone/email/in person and let them choose their preferred method of communication.
- Do your homework! Research the company they work for and their position/career path/expertise. Check out their LinkedIn profile, the company webpage, news outlets, and industry trades.
- Lead the conversation & have questions prepared. Unlike a traditional interview, you will be asking the majority of the questions. Prepare questions based on your research.
- Pitch yourself & your brand. Prepare your pitch/story about yourself. Be succinct, state your career goals/aspirations, and let the individual know your interests/strengths/skills.
- Ask for referrals. At the end of the meeting ask if there is anyone else they would recommend you connect with to explore the industry or gain more insight.
- Follow their lead for next steps. If the individual wants to keep in touch or help you further in your career exploration, they will tell you.
- Follow-up & thank them! This individual took time out of their schedule to speak with you, so be sure to thank them not only at the end of the discussion but also with a note or email after the meeting. If they made any referrals or recommendations, give them an update on how it went.

Interested in learning more? Check out the links below for additional information.

[Networking Tips from NCA](#)

Questions? Make an appointment with EPICS on Handshake
epics.soc.northwestern.edu