

Networking is about building and maintaining connections with people. Networks are used for all sorts of reasons, including finding out about work opportunities. To effectively network, you need to: know your network, grow your network and use your network.

## Knowing your network

Your network includes everyone you know, both personally and professionally. Consider everyone – the most unlikely people may be well connected!

Think about the people you know in the various ‘spheres’ of your life – family, friends, workmates, student peers, teaching staff and so on. It helps to sketch out your network, as it is easy to overlook contacts.

Useful contacts for new grads which may be overlooked:

- graduates from your year or other alumni– many will be working in organisations of interest to you (some will have Employee Referral Programs where employees are rewarded for referring high quality candidates to the organisation)
- parents of friends – they are at an age to be in management roles and to have well developed professional networks (and know you well enough to make an effort to help)
- current employers – while your part-time job may be in telemarketing or customer service, particularly if you work in a large organisation, talk with HR about professional opportunities.

## Building your network

Networking also means making new contacts particularly to build your professional network. Some ways to do this:

- Join a relevant [professional association](#). Become active in the association so you get to know people. ‘Active’ might mean attending seminars and events, but also consider volunteering for committee work. Associations rely a great deal on voluntary efforts of members so help is always welcomed.
- Join an online professional networking site such as [LinkedIn](#); particularly look to join a special interest group where strong industry-specific relationships can develop.
- Attend careers events on campus and introduce yourself to alumni and employers; if appropriate, make contact later
- Undertake [work experience](#) while still at Uni.

## Using your network

The key issue is to develop a state of mind where you're open and willing to tell everyone what you're looking for!

You need to be clear about what you want and express it succinctly. Even with friends, plan and rehearse some words.

For example:

*'I've started to look for graduate work. What I particularly want is a position in the finance department of a large organisation. Do you know anyone who works in this area? Do you think your parents might know anyone I could talk to about this?'*

Don't be shy about networking. People enjoy helping others, so give them the opportunity to feel good about themselves!

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