

TIPS - NETWORKING CONVERSATION (AKA: INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW)

Before the Informational Interview

- Research the person (LinkedIn, Google search) - Use **WHO Logic**:
What does the person do? (title, LinkedIn headline and about description)
How do they do the work? (special skills, strategies, energy/vibe)
Outcomes produced? (contribution to company, community, awards, recognition)
- Use **WHO Logic** to research the company. WHO Logic research helps you answer a very important question; **Why** you are interested in the person and the company?

During the Informational Interview

Be authentic! You can launch the conversation by asking curiosity questions about the company, the industry, the person's professional experiences. Find out what this person cares about. Here are some ideas for conversation topics. You can ask about:

- Industry trends; be ready to share your insights too (this is a conversation)
- Company trends: (same as above)
- Ask questions about the person's meaningful past projects, current, and upcoming projects
- Ask them what they want to learn to help them continue to advance professionally
- Ask for advice
- Ask them if they think there is anyone else at the company and/or within the industry you should speak with to broaden your understanding about the company/industry/functional area
- If they volunteer something about personal stuff/life; listen carefully

Take Notes! The information you gather can help you build the relationship. You are learning about this person and what they care about. When you know what this person cares about you can reach out periodically and share relevant information. Follow the company on LinkedIn and other sources. If you hear of something great happening at the company, reach out and congratulate the person. The same is true for the person; be mindful of their posts and engage with them via social media.

Take a Pulse During the Conversation! Does the **vibe** feel good? Is this person engaging in the conversation? Do you feel comfortable? Do you want to work toward building a relationship with this potential supporter/advocate?

After the Informational Interview

People want to know their time was valued. Send a thank you after the conversation and offer gratitude for advice given. It's also helpful to share with your contact that you followed the advice and what value you gained from the advice.

Sample Thank You: Dear [insert name]: Thanks very much for taking time to chat with me about your experience with [name of company]. I learned a great deal about the company and your career progression as well. Thanks also for recommending I reach out to [name of person]. I did connect and we have a meeting scheduled next week. I look forward to continued communication with you and appreciate any referrals and recommendations you can share. Again, thank you!

Sample Thank You: Dear [insert name]: Thanks very much for taking time to chat with me about your experience with [name of company]. I learned a great deal about the company and your career progression. Thanks also for recommending I join the [name of professional association]. I checked out the student memberships and joined yesterday. I have already received valuable information and know the membership will be useful. I look forward to continued communication with you and appreciate any referrals and recommendations you can share. Again, thank you!

BASIC OUTREACH & COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR CONTACTS (people who have accepted your connection request)

October/November: (What to work on during this time)

Prospect Development

Conversion from Prospects to Contacts

Informational Interviews - Conversations

Conversion from Contacts to Supporters & Advocates

December: Outreach to existing contacts (you have had a conversation)

Season's Greetings! I hope this time is filled with warmth and happiness. I recall our conversation this past fall and appreciate the advice you offered. Thank you again. I have a few follow up questions from our last conversation and am wondering if you have time for a quick chat next week? Thanks for considering this request and I look forward to your reply.
Warm regards,

OR

January: Outreach to existing contacts (You have had a conversation) -

Happy New Year! I hope the new year is off to a great start. I recall our conversation(s) this past fall and appreciate the advice you offered. Thank you again. It would be great to catch up with you sometime soon. For now, can I ask for your support when opportunities surface at your organization as I continue to seek an internship at [name of company]. I am confident I will add significant value and your endorsement would be very helpful.
Thank you,

December / January: Outreach to existing contacts (You are connected on LinkedIn but haven't been able to chat) -

[Season's Greetings! Happy New Year! I hope the new year is off to a great start.] Thanks so much for connecting with me on LinkedIn. I continue to research companies and jobs of interest and positions similar to yours at [name of company] represent exactly what I'm interested in doing. I would value an opportunity to learn more about your experience. Might it be possible to chat with you for 15 - 20 minutes in the next week or two. Thanks for considering this request.
Sincerely,

Late February/Early March Outreach to (Prioritized) Existing Contacts/Supporters/Advocates - (send in March - sometime around spring break time if needed) -

Greetings from East Lansing! I hope this message finds you well. I'm in the middle of a short spring semester break and wanted to reach out to express continued interest in [name of company]. I'm wondering if [name of company] might be engaged in any just-in-time internship development for Summer 2021. I would welcome the opportunity to connect to further discuss how my skills and experience can add value to [name of company]. Do you have time to chat next week?
Thank you,

May: Outreach to (Prioritized) Existing Contacts/Supporters/Advocates - (sometime before you begin your internship) -

Dear [insert name of individual]: I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to express my gratitude for your time and support. I will be interning with [name of company and include type of role]. I'm excited about the learning opportunity and am confident this experience will strengthen my skill set. I remain very interested in [name of company] and

look forward to exploring full-time positions in the future. Again, thank you for sharing valuable insights, advice, and time.

Sincerely,

August/September: Outreach to (Prioritized) Existing Contacts/Supporters/Advocates - (send sometime after you finish your internship) -

Dear [insert name of individual]: I hope this message finds you well. I just completed an internship with [company name] where I [summarize project/value add]. As I move into the second year of my MBA program, I am beginning to focus on post-MBA plans. My internship was great and I learned a great deal. [Company name] continues to be a top company for me and I would welcome an opportunity to connect soon to seek advice and gain insights from you. Thanks for considering this request. Please let me know if you might have some time next week. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Be Creative - Use your Data! In between these basic touch points or instead of these basic touch points use the data you gather during the informational and subsequent conversations to build the relationship based on what your contact cares about and your mutual interests. This is about sincere, authentic, and reciprocal relationship building. If it's a great vibe, you likely want to work at building the relationship.

Don't Stalk! Too much outreach can be a problem. Within a 6 - 8 month period, 3 - 5 touchpoints, unless your contact is initiating conversation with you.

VARIOUS MESSAGE SUGGESTIONS - COVID INFLUENCED (empathy)

Outreach via LinkedIn with connection request

Hello, [insert name/mention affiliation]. I hope this message finds you staying healthy and safe during these unprecedented times. Your background is impressive and inspirational. I am a student seeking advice and would welcome an opportunity to connect with you. Thank you!

Designed for people representing companies you have already interacted with/applied to:

Hello, [insert name]. I hope this message finds you staying healthy and safe during such unprecedented times. I am reaching out for two reasons, the first is to just check in to ask if your staff have been able to take a look at my resume. I'm happy to supply additional information or work samples to support my skills and abilities to add value to [company name].

Secondly, because we are in unprecedented times I am also wondering if I might be of assistance if you have any projects that I might support remotely. I want to support your organization, particularly related to any supply chain and/or business operations issues. While working for [insert company name] I was able to help with [insert a value point/story from your resume] to ensure customers were served and needs met. I am feeling compelled to help and want to let you know I am available if you deem appropriate.

Sincerely,

Outreach to Existing Contacts (people who have accepted your connection request via LinkedIn, BroadConnect, etc.)

Hello [name]: Greetings from MSU! I hope this message finds you healthy and safe. I'm in the midst of completing the fall semester [in the MBA program] and have completely transitioned to the virtual classroom. I hope your work transitions since Covid have been seamless.

I am reaching out to people who work at companies I admire. As I think about long term career management, I am hoping to expand my network and build strong relationships. I am curious about how things are going with [insert company name]. I know you must be very busy. Perhaps you might have some time to chat next week about your experiences with [name of company].

I look forward to hearing from you soon. My best wishes for your health and safety.

Warm Regards,

Outreach to Existing Contacts (You have had at least one conversation/informational) -

Hello, [insert name]. I hope this message finds you staying healthy and safe during such unprecedented times. I recall our conversation(s) [insert time period] and appreciate the advice you offered. Thank you again. I understand that Covid-19 is impacting companies

differently, so I'm unsure of hiring activity at [name of company]. I am hopeful that when the time is right, I can ask for your support when opportunities surface. I am confident I will add significant value and your endorsement would be very helpful. It would also be great to catch up with you sometime soon. Might you have a few moments next week for a brief conversation?
Thank you,

Outreach to Existing Contacts (You are connected on LinkedIn but haven't been able to schedule an informational) -

Hello, [insert name]. I hope this message finds you staying healthy and safe during such unprecedented times. Thanks so much for connecting with me on LinkedIn. I continue to research companies and jobs of interest and your role at [name of company] represents exactly what I'm interested in doing. I would value an opportunity to learn more about your experience. Might it be possible to chat with you for 10 - 15 minutes in the next week or two. Thanks for considering this request.
Sincerely,

Check-in with Recruiters/Hiring Director Regarding outstanding applications - Standard Email:

(You can also reach out via phone)

Hello, [insert name]. I hope this message finds you staying healthy and safe during such unprecedented times. I am reaching out to inquire about [name of job title] with [name of company]. I continue to be very interested in this opportunity. I am aware that Covid-19 is likely slowing down hiring activity but I'm wondering if you can share an update on the application status. I'm happy to forward any needed materials. I am also feeling very compelled to help where I can. I am available for short-term projects or informal temporary employment related to [insert relevant area(s), e.g., strategy, analytics, supply chain]. I am confident I can add value to [name of company]. Might you have time for a very brief conversation next week?
Sincerely,

TURNING DOWN AN OFFER

Turning down an offer -

Dear [insert name]: Thank you for the offer of employment with [name of company]. I have decided to accept another position. This is a very difficult decision for me. I learned a great deal about [name of company] during the interview process and I'm so impressed with the culture and the company commitment to professional growth. I welcome the opportunity to stay in contact as I progress through the [insert name of program, e.g., MBA] program and beyond. Please do let me know if you have questions or need additional information from me. With gratitude [or Sincerely],