Developing, using, and maintaining your professional network

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Today

• We have an hour and a half, which includes time for questions. Don’t be shy.
• You may take phone photos and tweet or post about the session
• The slides will be available after the session on the Faculty website as part of the symposium’s resources
Agenda

1. What is a network?
2. Academic and non-academic networks
3. Build, use, and maintain your network
4. Further resources
What is a network?

• It is a collection of people whom you can engage professionally:
  – Ask questions about your current field and specialty
  – Ask questions outside your current field and specialty
  – Ask questions about jobs and other opportunities
  – Ask questions about your career
  – Offer advice about what you know

A network is an annotated list of professional contacts that can be used for exchanging information throughout your professional career.
Academic and non-academic networks

• Academic
  – What graduate work does to you
  – Your graduate-school network

• Non-academic
  – My career “path” so far
  – How I made the big changes
  – Non-academic networking lessons from my transitions

• How your network can help you
What graduate work does to you

• You take classes with fellow grad students and some faculty
• You then prepare for exams with a faculty committee and perhaps your peers
• You then work on a thesis with a supervisor and advice of a committee

As you progress, grad school teaches you to listen to a smaller and smaller pool of authorities
Your graduate-school network

• It includes people who can help you get a job: your supervisor and your other referees, a small pool of authorities

• It includes other people working in your specialty and in your broader field, a larger pool, but still identifiable

• It includes people you meet at events within your field, such as conferences

The small pool of grad-school authorities are also the ones who can help you get academic jobs; the rest of your network is well-defined, largely by your field
My career “path” so far

• Native of Ithaca, NY, Cornell faculty brat: high school => college => grad school
• University of Michigan asst. prof.
• Bartender
• Amazon.com: many roles over 13 years
• Mindbloom: VP operations at a start-up
• Synapse: VP operations at a medium-sized product design engineering firm
• Chair, Board of Directors, Lambda Legal (nonprofit) [current]
• Consultant, author [current]
How I made the big changes

• Grad student => faculty member
  – Recommendations from my supervisor and committee members
• Faculty member => bartender
  – Denied tenure: needed a job! @#$%!
  – Got a job tending bar from bartending teacher by hearing about a gig posted at a local restaurant
• Bartender => Amazon.com
  – Chatted with fellow former member of grad student softball team, an early adopter of the internet, who told me about Amazon (1996)
  – Interviewed with them and discussed my skills (not much about my previous jobs)
  – Got new skills on the job and used them to take on new roles
• Chair, Board of Directors, Lambda Legal
  – Invited by a work colleague to become a donor
  – Consulted with them about improving their web properties
  – Invited to join Board of Directors; recently elected to chair the board
Non-academic networking lessons from my transitions

• Academics has relatively few jobs but straightforward paths to learn where they are and how to apply for them
• Non-academic work has many more jobs but with relatively unknown paths to them
• Only a few people can help you get an academic job; many people can help you get a non-academic job
• You will need people outside your graduate-school networks to help you find and understand non-academic jobs, bosses, and workplaces
How your network can help you

• Personal contacts help you reach out to people you know and expand your reach to people you do not know you do not know to help you learn
  – about jobs that are new to you
  – what a particular job advertisement really means
  – what a particular boss is like
  – what a particular workplace is like

• Personal contacts help résumés not get lost in a pile

Use your network as a research tool that you develop and tailor to yourself and that you engage for job-searches and career development
Build, use, and maintain your network

• Adapt your networking mindset
• Build your network
  – LinkedIn is the current tool
  – Create your pool of contacts (2)
• Use your network
  – The basic process of finding a job
  – How to use your LinkedIn contacts
  – Researching job descriptions (3)
  – Researching the hiring manager (2)
  – Researching organizations
• Maintain your network
  – Contacts are a core professional asset
  – Bias in networks
  – Professional courtesies
Adapt your networking mindset

• Only a few people can help you get an academic job, but many people can lead you to and help you get a nonacademic job
• Your network is as much for leads to information as it is for leads to jobs
• Broaden the range of people whom you add to your network
• Treat everyone you meet along the way as a colleague
LinkedIn is the current tool

• LinkedIn provides a database of companies, jobs, and people and deploys you into that pool
  – Companies and jobs: It helps you research organizations and their job listings
  – People: It helps you ask for introductions to people you don’t know through people you do know
  – You: It makes your résumé available online

• Use LinkedIn to create a group of people you know through whom you reach out to others
Create your pool of contacts

• Invite people you know to connect on LinkedIn
  – People in your own address book / contacts
  – People LinkedIn recommends, if you know them
  – People with whom you have interacted well

• Join groups that make sense for you: alumni orgs, professional societies, clubs, interest groups

• You should not add people you don’t know or whom you do not respect
  – Ask yourself “would I introduce her to someone I respect?” “would I do him a favor?”
Create your pool of contacts

• “I don’t know anyone.” Yes, you do. You may not know who among them will be relevant to your future professional life
• “I don’t know anyone who can help me with a job search.” It’s not primarily who you know; it’s who they know, too
• “A lot of people I know have jobs that I don’t know anything about.” Feature, not a bug!
The basic process of finding a job

• Find a job listing
• Research the organization
• Find a contact there, if you can, and discuss the job
• Apply, with a résumé and a letter
• Have a phone or video interview (sometimes)
• Have an in-person interview
• Submit references, supporting material for verification
• Receive offer, possibly negotiate its terms

People who send out many résumés and get no response have usually omitted the research and job investigation
How to use your LinkedIn contacts

• Find a job description or workplace you want to know more about
• Look in your LinkedIn contacts for someone who has that kind of job, who works or has worked at that workplace, or who is connected to someone who has
• Ask “Hello, Anne, I see [you/someone you know] worked at [job type/organization]. Would you be willing to [answer some questions about [job/company] / introduce me to [that person]]?” (Of course, this approach also works for anyone not on LinkedIn.)
Researching job descriptions

• Read a lot of them (100+) to learn their jargon before you apply to anything
• Learn academic nearest equivalents for required and requested skills
• Ask friends in those types of work to help you understand the job descriptions: a personal contact will also help you find other people to ask

If you ask specific questions and respect people’s time, most people are glad to help you learn about a job, a workplace, and a hiring manager
Researching job descriptions

Job descriptions may be written by
- the hiring manager and / or
- someone in Human Resources and / or
- the last person to hold the job, especially if that person succeeded at the job

The person you will be directly working for has not always written the job description. A personal contact at the organization is your best source of information about what the job description really means
Researching job descriptions

Job descriptions have many audiences:
• External and internal candidates
• The hiring manager’s boss and Finance, to prove the position is needed

Applicants are not the only audience for the job description. A personal contact at the organization is your best source of information about what the job description really means
Researching the hiring manager

• A hiring manager has an idea of the person and skills they want but can be persuaded otherwise. You can make the case that you are the right person with the right skills – if you know what the job description really means.

• A hiring manager trusts someone who has worked at their company to refer job candidates more than anyone else. Finding someone you have a connection with where you are applying gets you information from a source a hiring manager is likely to trust.
Researching the hiring manager

• When you get an interview, here’s what the hiring manager usually does:
  – Looks at your LinkedIn profile and see if you know anyone in common
  – Googles your name
  – Asks around to find out if anyone they know knows you personally
  – Asks if you have questions for them

You need to conduct at least the same level of research about the hiring manager as the hiring manager does about you
Researching the organization

• Learn about the organization’s work
• Try to learn how the job you are interested in fits into the organization’s work
• Learn how the organization describes itself to the public
• Learn about how the organization views its community
Contacts are a core professional asset

• Bring your contacts up to date: name, an email address, and (usually) a mobile phone number
• Keep your contacts updated
• LinkedIn connection suffices for purely professional contacts
• Set a calendar reminder to invite new LinkedIn connections every week: your network is never “done” or “good enough”
  • Back them up, following the rule of 3: create a local, a cloud, and an external-device backup for your own contact repository
Bias in networks

• Investigate your contacts from time to time:
  – What percentage are men? women?
  – What percentage are from outside your own racial group?
  – What percentage come from within your current institution?
  – Do you have contacts from your secondary education?

• Keep a mental list of people you have decided not to include and the reasons you didn’t add them

Your goal is the network with a rich range of experience and points of view. Don’t exclude people you know and respect just because you don’t know how their work could ever be relevant to yours.
Professional courtesies

• One day you will be offering the advice
  – When possible, say yes to someone who asks for your time politely and professionally

• You never know whom you may work for one day
  – Treat everyone courteously and professionally at all times
  – Treat everyone as someone who can contribute to your organization

• Everyone you interact with may be or refer your next great employee
  – Treat everyone courteously and professionally at all times
  – Treat everyone as someone who can contribute to your organization
Further resources

www.annekrook.com grad students and postdocs tab
Ferrazzi, Never Eat Alone