We welcome everyone to this edition of the “Monday Dose.” As we have done in the past, we select an important topic that will enhance our professional development. This month’s issue is on “Professional Networking.”

As students and faculty, we all agree that networking is a valuable means of developing professional knowledge, creating new opportunities, and obtaining help during a job search. However, many of us are either unaware of how to get the most out of this process or don’t feel the need to. Sooner or later, some of us will find ourselves in the job market or needing professional help of some sort. We think it’s important to take on this issue at this time, so we can better manage our existing networks or start building better professional networks that will enhance our development.

Sit back and enjoy.
IN THE NEWS

Professional networks could be made up of the people you directly work with, alumni, social and affinity groups, contacts with peers and senior colleagues in your field. This article by Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn (A business-oriented social networking service used mainly for professional networking) identifies two main types of professional networks you need in order to succeed: Allies and Acquaintances, and why you need a blend of the two.


Why do we need to build strong professional networks? Studies have shown that at least 50% of jobs are never advertised—some studies place that number as high as 80%. Networking allows employers to fill open positions, often by individuals outside of the company (or dept.) who learned of the position through someone from within. This article talks about the advantages that you are likely to derive from good networks.


You choose who you want to be in your professional network. This article by Forbes magazine highlights 10 important people such as the “coach” and the “connector” that you should have in your professional network. People with strong networks get more things done more effectively; they learn from others with different knowledge or experience; and gather advice from different perspectives.

“Opportunity dances only with those on the dance floor”
- H Jackson Brown Jr

Quotes of the Month

“Networking is more about ‘farming’ than it is about ‘hunting’—it’s about cultivating relationships with the people you know”
- Dr. Ivan Misner
In addition to maintaining existing contacts, it's critical to devote time to meeting new professionals.

Develop a strategy for expanding your network, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. For instance, as students, we can decide to get to know more people outside your program. You may also consider attending more professional conferences and other relevant social activities.

Many people often confuse networking with job searching.
Networking is not a way to get a job; rather it's a means of developing contacts and exchanging information.
Often this exchange of information is the first step on the career path that can lead to a job.
Networking affords you the opportunity to interact with people outside of your regular social circle.

“Professional Networking Tips”

To be successful, networking must be a year-round priority.

Your goal is to create long-term relationships that are mutually beneficial.

As students and professionals, we should make a sincere investment in nurturing our networks.
“Professional Networking DO’S”

- Get out there
  - Professional associations, such as the American Public Health Association or the American College of Healthcare Executives, provide excellent opportunities through meetings and conventions to expand your circle of contacts. Most hold frequent meetings that include time to mingle and meet new people.
  - Other places to network include: Social media such as LinkedIn and Partner up, networking events, and networking groups.

- Refine your approach if you need to.
  - For those who are uncomfortable introducing themselves to others, practice how you'll introduce yourself to others before attending conferences.
- Be an open-minded person.
- Have some networking goals.

- Create a tracking system (Keep in touch)
  - Maintaining your network takes effort. Stay in touch with those in your network on a regular basis. This is not to say call or email your contacts every week.
- Offer support to others
  - Invest time in sustaining your relationships. For example, send relevant newspaper clippings or online articles that may interest a colleague.
“Professional Networking DON’TS”

- An initial meeting is not always an appropriate or convenient time to engage someone who is a potential connection in a long conversation about his or her profession, solicit advice or ask for referrals.

- If you are interested in talking with this person, ask if he or she will be interested in having a longer conversation with you at a later date.

- Avoid limiting your circle of contacts.

- Being overly aggressive or having the mindset of “How can I profit from this contact” is not a good approach.

- Blatant self-promotion, trying to force an idea that you might have.

- Overlooking new venues.

- Remember that building a good network is a continuous process.

- Interrupting others in mid-speech.

- You should learn to be a good listener.

- Failing to write down pertinent information.

- Lacking appreciation.

FACTS TO REMEMBER

- Professional networking is an effective means of exploring careers and learning about job opportunities. However it requires time and effort to be done properly and effectively.

- A strong network can be an integral part of helping you achieve your career goals.
“Ask the Professor”

Questions:
1) What does professional networking mean to you?
2) In your professional career, how much of an impact has networking had on your progress/advancement or career support?
3) How do you go about networking with other professionals?

Answer:

1) What does professional networking mean to you?
Everything. It is critical to get to know those working in your current field or in the field you want to be.

2) In your professional career, how much of an impact has networking had on your progress/advancement or career support?
Networking has been a very important, instrumental step in where I am today. I owe it a huge THANK YOU!

3) How do you go about networking with other professionals?
I map out the highest traffic events where professionals will be and show up. I then go, mingle, and make sure to always show my passion and commitment to the field with the utmost sincerity.
Answer:

I realized the importance of professional networking early in my career. My primary approach to professional networking has been through professional service. Luckily, as a faculty member, we are expected to provide service to strengthen and support our professions. As such, through professional service, I was able fulfill one of my job expectations while simultaneously developing a national professional network, expertise in my field, and a reputation for myself and the institution where I work. How did I go about this?

As a junior faculty member, I joined the American Public Health Association and became actively involved with the Medical Care Section. I attended the annual meetings of the Section and showed my interest in the mission and work of the Section. I volunteered to chair the Section’s Women’s Health Committee and was soon elected as a Section Councilor. This work afforded me the opportunity to meet and collaborate with like-minded individuals from organizations across the nation. I followed the same path with AcademyHealth, the national association for health policy and health services research. I joined the association and helped establish and then lead the Academy’s Gender and Health Interest Group. Here also, I developed a network of women’s health researchers through which I was able to identify collaborative research opportunities and join the editorial board of Women’s Health Issues.

Meanwhile, I did not forget the students and faculty who were a part of my graduate education. We stayed in touch and connected at least annually at those professional conferences that I mentioned above. So....when a wonderful job opportunity opened up at the University of Florida (a while back), it was one of the faculty at UF (who had been a fellow student during my PhD studies) who told me about it and encouraged me to apply. Similarly, when another job opportunity opened up at Penn State, it was my PhD advisor, now at Penn State, who told me about it. Lesson learned: Stay in touch with folks, as you never know when they will introduce you to a great opportunity.

One area where I need to do better is social media professional networking. Perhaps this can be my new year’s resolution!

Finally, I would re-iterate to our students the tips provided in this issue... professional networking is a continuous process, and the time to think about it and engage in it is NOW. While you may be now focused on completing your class project and studying for your final exam, you must also plan ahead for your career and future. If you wait until graduation to think about networking and career, then you’re too late! My best wishes to all of you.
Dates to Remember

- Thanksgiving break, November 26th -- 28th
- Breakfast with the Expert, December 2nd, 8:30 am, Lamb 116
- Undergraduate Field Experience Presentations, December 4th and 5th, Culp Center Forum on 3rd floor
- Graduate Field Experience Presentations, December 11th, Lamb 131
- Final Exam Week, December 8th --
- Commencement, December 13th