



Boston College Law School

Office of Career Services

10 STEPS TO NETWORKING SUCCESS

1. Definition of Networking – It’s not what you think it is.

Networking is often confused with schmoozing and the thought of it makes most students run for the door. It is not about asking for a job. It is about contacting people with whom you have something in common and using them as resources to help you gather useful information (including names of other people). Simply put, networking is about speaking with people you already know to meet more people. Although your first contact will not usually offer you a position, the contact may lead to other individuals who may help you in more direct ways, including actual employment. It is better to have the network in place before you need to use it.

2. Set specific networking goals.

Perhaps your goal is to “just get a job”. But what kind of job? Which areas of the law interest you? Litigation, corporate, family law? Which practice settings excite you? Large firm, government, non-profit organization? How do you envision the daily practice of law? What are your goals as a lawyer? Networking will help you get a better understanding of the numerous practices of law and in general, of being a lawyer. Only through information gathering will you have a better idea of what you want. Meeting professional contacts and maintaining these relationships enable you to (i) figure out what you want to do; (ii) tap into the hidden job market; and (iii) take control of your job search process.

3. Make a list of your personal contacts.

You may think “I don’t know any lawyers” or “no one in my family went to law school”. The purpose of this exercise is to put everyone on the personal contact list. Someone on your list may in turn know someone who may be able to help you directly. See below for an example of a contact chart to get you started and include the following individuals:

- Parents and siblings
- Grandparents and extended family
- All of your spouse’s or partner’s relatives and contacts
- Childhood friends
- College classmates, sorority sisters, fraternity brothers, teammates
- Law school classmates
- Former co-workers
- Neighbors
- Members of volunteer organizations and associations
- Former roommates
- Spiritual leader and fellow congregants

- Doctor and dentist
- Hairdresser
- Commuting friends

Name	Address, Phone, email	When and how you met them	Who referred you to them	Who they in turn referred you to	Any correspondence	Anything personal they mentioned	Salient points of conversation	Any subsequent action taken

4. Expand the list.

Think of those individuals you would like to speak with and add them to your contact list.

- High school and undergraduate alumni
- BC Law alumni
- Bar Association members
- BC Law faculty and staff
- Career Services panel speakers

5. How to initiate contact?

Now that you have compiled this extensive list, how should you initiate contact? Phone versus email?

Writing is the safer route and calling is the quicker route. *Considering calling first* if you worked with the individual and developed a friendly rapport; you have met the contact at a professional meeting and the contact gave you his/her business card; you have met the contact through relatives or close friends; you are comfortable with articulating on the telephone with strangers. *Consider writing first* if you never met the contact; you found the contact through the Alumni Career Network, Martindale Hubbell or through a computer search; you listened to the person speak on a panel; or someone else gave you the contact's name.

If you decide to send an email, you should follow-up with a telephone call about one week later and reference the email. Your email should not sound like a cover letter seeking a job. Avoid the word "interview" and DO NOT include your resume with the letter. Always include the name of any mutual acquaintance or the source that led you to the contact in the first paragraph.

Sample:

Dear Mr./Ms. [_____]:

I am a 2L student at Boston College Law School and came across your name through the [undergraduate] alumni career network. I am interested in the practice of family law and

was hoping you would not mind sharing 20 minutes of your time. I recently completed my summer internship for a judge in the probate court and would appreciate any advice or insight you may have regarding the practice of family law in the private sector. I will follow up with a call next week to see if you would be willing to speak with me. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,
Student Jones

6. Once I make contact, then what?

Set up a time to talk or meet in person. The meeting will be more productive if you have conducted research about your contact and have planned in advance what you want to cover in the interview. Be prepared to take the lead in the conversation. You should have a purpose and an agenda. Remember, you are the interviewer. Examples of questions to ask:

- How did you get started in your career?
- How did you make the transition from your previous job (or career) to your current job?
- Could you describe a typical day?
- What do you like best/least about the type of work you do?
- What skills are necessary in your area(s) of practice?
- What coursework or work experience would you recommend?
- May I use your name when I meet others in the field?
- Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information (always ask for additional potential contacts)?

7. Debrief yourself.

As soon as possible after the meeting, write down everything you wish to remember from what the contact said. Even if the meeting was not particularly helpful, indicate so on your contact list.

8. Send a thank you note.

In this situation – email is cheap. Take the time, get a note card, put pen to paper, buy the stamp, and mail it. The extra effort shows your appreciation. Thank them for their time, for any particular piece of information you found useful, and for any referrals. Let them know that you will stay in touch.

9. Follow up and keep the relationship going. Conversely, when to move on?

Often times, students will put in all this effort to make the initial contact, only to let the relationship lapse. Update the contact of your job search progress. Let him or her know of recent accomplishments with moot court and clinical work, recent job interviews, and

when you settle on a job. The contact has invested time in you as well and would most likely appreciate updates.

Conversely, keep in mind that there is invariably some rejection involved in networking. You cannot take it personally. Attorneys are extremely busy with huge demands placed on their time. General guideline: if you have attempted reaching out to a contact 3 times with no response, then, move on.

10. Stay positive and persistent.

The results of networking will not be immediate. Networking takes time, patience, and a healthy dose of enthusiasm. Networking can be compared to exercising. If the results were immediate, we would all be running in the next Boston Marathon. There are no shortcuts in preparing to run the marathon. Similarly, there are no shortcuts to successful networking.

Put these 10 steps to work and stop by Career Services to help you with the process.