LAND YOUR DREAM JOB

How to Network like a Pro

Written by Phil Cawdery, MBA

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Thanks for picking up my eBook!

The job seeker in the 21st century faces unprecedented competition. For each open position, an average of 59 candidates apply for the job. To compound matters, **only 12%** of candidates end up being called in for an interview. With odds like these, it's surprising that people aren't volunteering to participate in *The Hunger Games* instead! Making matters even worse for the traditional job seeker, most jobs these days are not being filled through formal job postings. Every year millions of jobs are found through the hidden job market – jobs that are not ever advertised publicly. It is estimated that **up to 80%** of jobs are found through the hidden job market! Based on this, you should spend 80% of your time networking to find a job and only 20% of your time (at most) applying online. In this book I present a step-by-step system for how to make the most of your time networking.

Be it business, politics, sports or the arts, eventually the same old model for success ends up turning against the average participant. Like the blackjack table in Vegas, the odds become stacked in favour of the house. The advent of internet job sites such as Indeed, Monster and Workopolis have opened up job opportunities to the whole world. But instead of this helping the average job seeker, this has stacked the job marketplace in favour of organizations that can pick and choose from a long list of qualified candidates. I like to refer to online job sites as "The Black Hole of the Internet."

I used to rely heavily on applying for work online – it didn't get me very far. It was only after entering an MBA program, where I learned extensively about the power of networking, that I shifted my approach from applying online to networking with the right people to open up doors. Within just a couple months of shifting my approach and consistently applying my networking system, I landed my dream internship with the largest Canadian consulting firm. Once I finished my MBA, I used the same approach and, in short order, I landed a role in IT transformation with a Top 3 global bank.

Networking is about 3 things:

1. Connecting with the right people
2. Starting a meaningful conversation
3. Creating a professional relationship to uncover opportunities in the hidden job market

Seeing the transformation in my own career over such a short period of time has inspired me to share my system with others who are struggling to land their dream jobs. I give a lot of credit to my mentors and the MBA program in shaping my approach to finding my dream job. It's now time to pay it forward to you.

I hope you enjoy reading this eBook as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Phil Cawdery, MBA

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"All great acts are ruled by intention" - Brenna Yovanoff

If you've picked up this e-book, you are in all likelihood a person of action. That's a great trait to have to help carve out a successful and fulfilling career. One drawback for many people of action however is that they tend to place too much emphasis on the "Fire" stage of the "Ready, Aim, Fire!" approach to reaching their goals. I can speak from personal experience – it didn't help that I was in a graduate program with a bunch of Type A personalities that were all about "Fire"!

There is great value in taking a step back and evaluating your goal to ensure it aligns with your values. Self-reflection and contemplation are both underappreciated in the Western world. These principles are much more common place in the Eastern world, rooted in the teachings of Buddhism. Regardless of your spiritual or religious inclinations (or lack thereof), inward thinking and self-reflection are keys to setting your intention.

Think BIG

A common thread I see in many job seekers I help is not a lack of vision, but a small, self-limiting vision. Too many people grossly underestimate their abilities. This self-limiting behaviour leads to goals that are far below what they are capable of accomplishing.

To do your best to think **BIG**, I encourage you to paint a picture of your end game. What is it that you envision yourself being and doing 20 to 30 years down the line? Sipping a margarita at the beach is great, and perhaps a part of that vision, but what I'm referring to is the work you will be doing.

Be Specific

It's important not to just come up with a goal such as *"I want to become a businesswoman who will make good enough money to eventually start her own business."* While this is a start, this is not a vision that will lead you to your goal. To elevate your vision to a level that will lead you to your dream job, you need to be specific! To do this, you have to determine the position you are seeking. If you are already clear about this – great! You can move onto the next section. If you have any doubt or lack of clarity, this next exercise is for you.

Life is about decisions. You need to make decisions that align with your values and the life you want to live. Perhaps a work-life balance is your number one priority. Or maybe it's a high salary that influences your career moves. Being part of something bigger than yourself or contributing back to society are also aspects that could be central to your values. You need to be honest with yourself and pinpoint what drives you.

Taking a personality assessment such as Myers Briggs or DISC, coupled with a skills inventory test, will help refine what you value as well as what jobs would play to your strengths and personality while aligning with your values.

There are plenty of online career development websites to help with this process. A great online resource to do this is MyPlan.com. It is a one stop shop for learning more about careers and to take assessments. I am not affiliated with this site, I just think it's a great starting point for anyone looking to better define their career.

For salaries, the two websites that I've found that are the best are PayScale.com and GlassDoor.com. What I like about these two sites is that they provide typical salary ranges for a multitude of positions, across many organizations and industries. While these salary scales are based on user feedback provided to these websites, and therefore may not be 100% accurate, they are usually pretty reliable.

Looking towards the future, you will also want to look at trends and projected job growth in your areas of interest. I lean towards going to government websites that provide this information. There are sites at the state and provincial levels that you can find easily by googling "job trends [state/province]" There are also country level statistics that you should take a look at as well:

USA: http://www.bls.gov/emp/
Canada: http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_bulletin.do

This is an important piece of the puzzle to find your dream job. Make sure you give this step the proper time so you can hone in on what type of job will not just fulfill you but also prove to be a reliable source of income in the years to come.

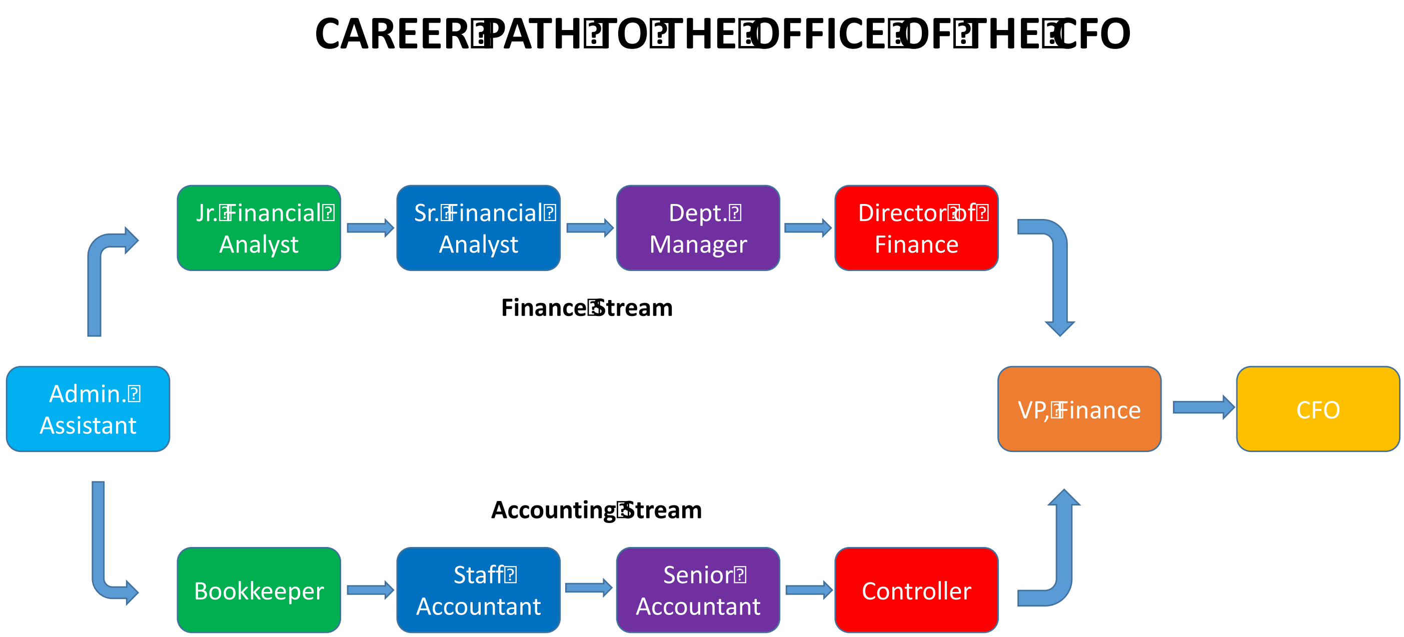
Work Back Sequentially

Now that you have a better sense of what type of position you aspire to attaining – be it a CFO (Chief Financial Officer) or an RN (Registered Nurse) – you need to work back sequentially to identify what positions you should apply for based on what stage you are at in your career. One of the biggest pitfalls I've seen when helping people aspiring to make their way to their dream job is a lack of a road map. Like any epic road trip, the road from where you are now to your dream job is probably not from point A to point B. There more than likely will be multiple points along the way that you will need to pass before you reach your final destination.

By using websites like PayScale and GlassDoor, you can take a look at typical career paths they map out that lead to your dream job. From there, you can take a look at the requirements that a typical job posting asks for on Indeed, Monster or Workopolis. This will allow you to reverse engineer what position you should be seeking first.

Let's use the example of CFO.

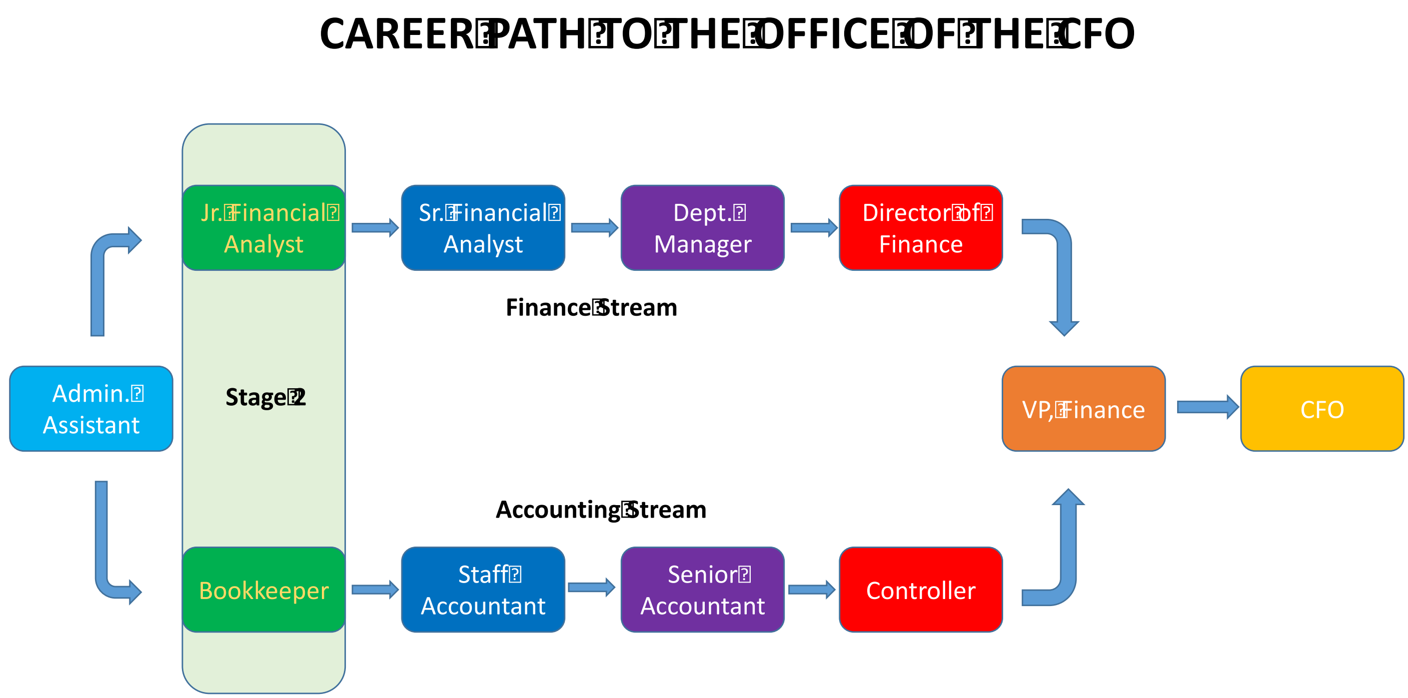
Here is a typical career path that will land you in a CFO position:



For this example, there are two major streams that lead to the CFO position – the Finance Stream and the Accounting Stream. While these streams share some similarities, there are also some distinct differences that you will find during your research through the online resources I have listed earlier. If you prefer one particular path, you do not need to compromise and can just focus on climbing that career ladder. If you are at least somewhat flexible, this will open up more opportunities to get on a career ladder to reach your goal. Keep in mind as well that as you progress throughout your career, you can switch between ladders with the proper certification and training. Considering the average 40 year old has held an average of 10 jobs, this is commonplace and something that you don't need to worry too much about.

Based on your research and online job postings, you can determine which stage of the career ladder you are on. If, for example, you have recently completed a Bachelor or Associate of Commerce with some entry-level experience and have not yet received further certification (e.g. a CPA or CFA), then you most likely will fall into the second stage of this ladder – either in the Junior Financial Analyst or Bookkeeper position.

These are the positions you should primarily target:



Write Your Mission Statements

Now that you have a clear picture of where you are headed in both the short and long term, it's time to create two mission statements for the following:

1. Your "Think **BIG**" vision statement
2. Your "Next Step" mission statement

For your "Think **BIG**" vision statement, you need to do just that – Think BIG! I want you to come up with the most audacious goal you can conjure. I also want you to be specific as possible. Here is a good formula for writing a "Think **BIG**" vision statement:

"I, [name], will become a/the [position] of/in [organization/industry] where I will [action]"

Here are some examples:

"I, Susie Chan, will become the CFO of KPMG Canada where I will create record profits for the organization."

"I, Alex Mirnov, will become a Sales Executive in the energy sector where I will lead a team that generates record sales year-over-year."

"I, Patricia Klein, will become the CEO of Habitat for Humanity where I will facilitate the construction of a record number of affordable houses."

"I, Raul Sidhu, will become the Director of Technology in the video game industry where I will oversee the development of the Game of the Year."

It's important to create a "Think **BIG**" vision statement because it serves as a reminder of your ultimate goal and the path you are blazing to attain your dream job. It also helps keep you motivated during times where you might experience frustration or self-doubt with the job search and networking process.

Your "Next Step" mission statement that you will write next is your goal to get on or move up the right career ladder to reach your dream job. This mission statement is about leveraging your network to acquire a suitable job for your skillsets and interests on that career ladder. We will use a similar formula:

"I, [name], will find [position(s)] in [industry] where I will [action]"

If you are targeting more than one position, feel free to write more than one mission statement. What I prefer to use is forward slashes between the two positions (e.g. consultant/business analyst) in a single mission statement.

Here are some possible mission statements that align with the vision statements above:

"I, Susie Chan, will find a bookkeeping position in consulting where I will gain an understanding of the industry and apply my education."

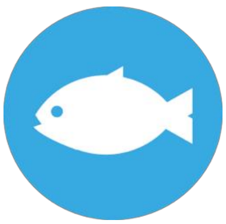
"I, Alex Mirnov, will find a sales representative role in the energy sector where I will make noticeable impact by exceeding sales targets.

"I, Patrick Klein, will find a project coordinator role in the non-profit sector where I will make a meaningful difference and hone my organizational skills."

"I, Raul Sidhu, will find a testing position in the video game industry where I will learn more about video game design and the industry."

Now that you have your vision and mission statements down pat, it's time to make use of them! Every morning and every night, review these statements and repeat them out loud. Through *affirmation*, you will reiterate to yourself that your dreams are possible. Affirmation is a powerful tool to reaching your goals. It helps you stay focused, positive and forward thinking. Post these statements in your office, by your bedside – anywhere that you will see them twice a day so you can reaffirm your goals and your journey to yourself.

Regardless of the industry you are seeking employment in, there are three broad categories of companies in any given industry:



"The Big Fish"

The Big Fish are the top players and largest organizations in their industry. These are companies that, generally speaking, are well established and hold strong brand awareness in their markets. These companies do not necessarily operate internationally depending on what industry they are in and their service offerings. These are the easiest to identify – by simply googling "top companies [whatever industry]" you will be able to identify the *Big Fish*. Otherwise, you can google "companies by revenue [whatever industry]"; "companies by profits [whatever industry]" or "companies by size [whatever industry]".

For an industry, such as consulting in Canada, you would come up with a list that would look similar to this:

1. Deloitte
2. PriceWaterhouseCoopers
3. Ernst and Young
4. KPMG
5. Accenture
6. IBM

Some firms in an industry have carved out their own niche. For example, Accenture and IBM are both well known for business technology consulting while Deloitte, while having many service lines, has a particularly strong health care focus. If there is a particular industry niche that interests you, do the research up front and make that company a priority target for networking.

Pros of working for a Big Fish:

- Great brand for your resume that can open up many doors to create a fulfilling and lucrative career
- Great training and systems that you can apply wherever you go in your career, be it a mid-sized player or a startup company
- Becoming part of an impressive network of professionals you can leverage and learn from

Cons of working for a Big Fish:

- Huge amounts of competition for the same promotion or internal opportunity you have your eyes on
- Fewer opportunities to wear multiple hats in a role and take on different responsibilities
- Expect to work long hours starting at the industry average wage (at best)

"Mid-Sized Players"

Mid-sized players are usually large companies with recognizable brands like *The Big Fish*, but usually are more specialized and may not have the same international brand awareness or reach compared to the *Big Fish*. These firms may not show up if you google top companies by revenue or size. In this case, you will have to do a bit more digging. You can do this by looking at free websites, such as Quora or Reddit, where people ask for information. Usually you can find a similar question with thoughtful answers from the website community without posting your own. In instances where you can't find the answer you are looking for, ask the community for a list of companies in the industry. You will tend to receive useful feedback within 24 hours of posting – I wish I received email responses that quickly!

Mid-Sized Players in the consulting industry in Canada include:

1. MNP
2. Grant Thornton
3. CGI
4. BDO
5. Fujitsu

Pros of working for a Mid-Sized Player:

- It's the "middle bowl of porridge": firms can have enough structured processes and formal training that you can leverage while not having the same level of intense competition for positions within the organization
- You have the opportunity to wear multiple hats and take on different responsibilities
- You can have great mentoring opportunities as the organization may be small enough where you connect with the higher levels of the organization on at least a semi-regular basis

Cons of working for a Mid-Sized Player:

- A Mid-Sized brand is usually not well recognized internationally or even across different industries nationally
- *Mid-Sized Players* have a tendency to be in a growth phase that includes mergers and acquisitions. While this provides more opportunities in some contexts, it can also lead to positions being cut as the organization moves towards streamlining employment and realizing greater efficiencies
- It's harder to take your experience at a *Mid-Sized Player* and go work for a *Big Fish* than the other way around

"The Rest"

What I have coined as *The Rest* includes small organizations, startups and one person shows (aka independent consultants) in the industry. *The Rest* is a lot harder to encapsulate and is more varied that *The Big Fish* or *The Mid-Sized Players*. Aside from grinding away with Google searches, I find a lot of these potential employers can be located by searching on LinkedIn (more on this later) and connecting with your existing network who might know someone in this cluster.

Pros of working for The Rest:

- You will likely work side-by-side with the key players in the organization which can lead to fantastic mentoring opportunities
- You *will* wear multiple hats. In any small organization that lacks the structure of a Big Fish or Mid-Sized Player, you will be expected to fill in the gaps wherever needed – lots of learning opportunities
- With the best of *The Rest*, if you exceed their wildest dreams, the career advancement opportunities can exceed yours when the company is rapidly growing and begins to need a more formalized structure

Cons of working for The Rest:

- Lack of a brand you can leverage for exit opportunities with more mature organizations
- There is less job security as startups and smaller organizations are more likely to be bought out or fold
- With less structure, you will have to be comfortable handling a high level of ambiguity and change at work (if this suits you – add it to the Pro list!)

As you can see, there is no right answer which of these three categories of organizations is best to go after. There is only the right answer for **YOU**. If you are just graduating or are not currently employed then finding A job in the industry rather than THE job maybe your strategy. Some others are adamant about working for a *Big Fish* or a startup and will patiently plug away at networking and applying for work until the right opportunity comes along. I can't tell you what is best for you – listen to your intuition.

What if I am open to different industries?

Great! If that's the case, you can follow this process for multiple industries. If you are open to pretty much any industry, you can create a list of 20 dream companies you would like to work for as a starting point and will fill in the rest by who is in your network and your network's network later in this system.

Should I connect with people that work in a type of organization not in my preferred category?

Absolutely! For one, it's difficult to project how your networking activities are going to go with your preferred firms. Even with a direct contact, due to timing and circumstances, you will not always be able to convert your networking efforts into a job offer. Secondly, people in the industry know each other. This provides you an opportunity to connect with your contact's colleagues through your networking efforts.

RESEARCH THE PEOPLE

Setting Up your Network Tracker

An organized job search leads to great results. As you use this networking system, you will need to keep all your contacts and points of reference organized in a spreadsheet. This will also allow you to track follow up action you need to take.

Here is a template to use to track your networking progress and follow up required:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	Priority	Company	Contact Name	Title	Contact Info	Connections in Common	Action Taken	Action Date	Follow Up	FU Date	Second FU	FU Date
2	1	Deloitte	John Hancock	Partner	Email/LI profile	Alice Wong	Sent LI msg to AW to connect with DB	02-Oct	Left VM to AW	09-Oct	Emailed	23-Oct
3	1	KPMG	Martha Brown	Senior Manager	Email/LI profile	DIRECT CONTACT	Sent email to MB	02-Oct	Spoke with MB, meeting on Fri	21-Oct		
4	2	MNP	Randal Smith	Director	Email/LI profile	Janice Thompson	Sent LI msg to JT to connect with RS	03-Oct	Meeting set with RS on Wed	19-Oct		
5	2	Grant Thornton	Sara Greene	Manager	Email/LI profile	DIRECT CONTACT	Sent email to SG					
6	3	ABC Consulting	Allan Chen	Founder	Email/LI profile	Phil Bailey	Sent email to PB to connect with AC					
7	3	Sparrow Co	Christine Young	Owner	Email/LI profile	George Forrest	Sent LI msg to GF to connect with CY					
8	3	FRS Consulting	Wilma Stone	CEO	Email/LI profile	DIRECT CONTACT	Sent email to WS					

With this tracker you will record a priority ranking from 1 to 3 in terms of your interest in the company, the contact details of your direct or shared contacts and action/follow up dates for reaching out to these contacts. As you read through the book, you will learn how to record these details and how to follow up to set up informational interviews.

Know Your Network – It's Bigger Than You Think!

Once you have researched the industry you want to break into, it's time to identify the people that are going to help you get your foot in the door with those companies.

How many people do you think your network is made up of? 100? 200? If you are just looking at the number of people you are connected to on LinkedIn, you are sorely mistaken. Given the law of the six degrees of separation, where everyone in the world is connected to each other by a maximum of six degrees, your network is inevitably going to be much bigger than you might expect.

When you think about your network, think outside the box and think **BIG**. Brainstorm all the ways you know people – from the hockey team you play on to your family friends. These people are all part of your network.

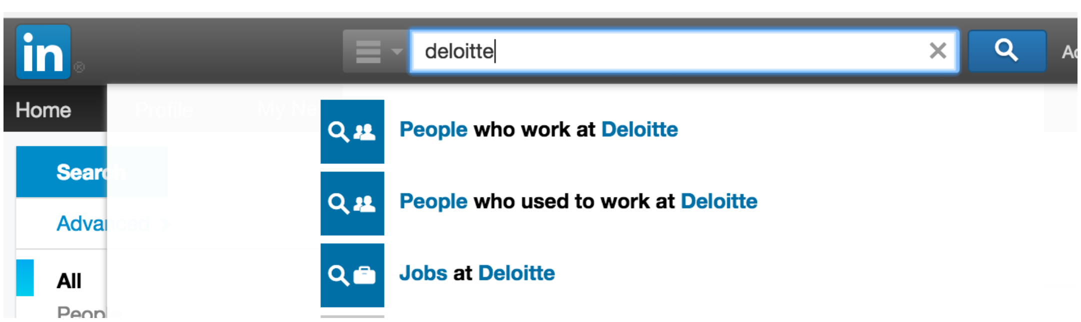
Here is an example of what your network might *really* look like:

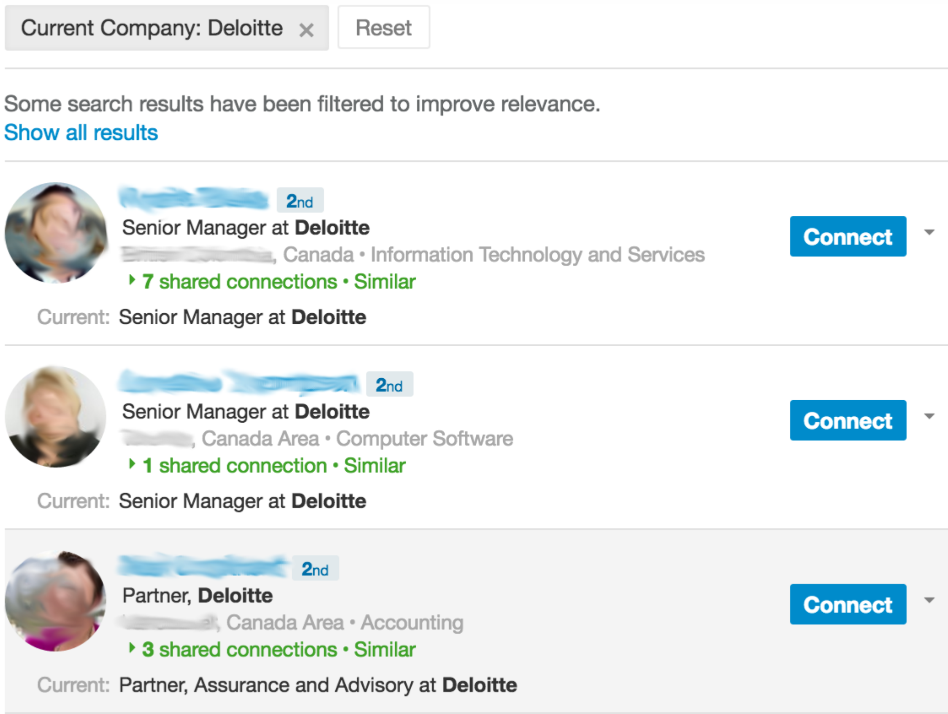
Your (Bigger Than You Thought) Network

When I completed my MBA, I took this concept to heart and made a concerted effort to get my name into the marketplace through non-conventional parts of my network. I would carry my business cards around with me. When I would get together with family friends, mentors and colleagues at social gatherings, I would make a point of mentioning I was looking for work in a few specific industries. Were these people in the industry I wanted to get into? Sometimes, yes. Most often, not. But many had connections in their *own* networks that could help me.

Finding Shared Connections

Harnessing the true power of your network starts with finding shared connections on LinkedIn. To do this, first search for a dream company that you want to work at in the top search bar. When you type in a company name, such as Deloitte, it will give you three options: *People who work at Deloitte*, *People who used to work at Deloitte* and *Jobs at Deloitte*. You will be using the first two selections to find people who either work or have worked at that company. LinkedIn automatically puts profiles that you have in your network, followed by profiles where there is at least 1 shared connection between you and someone in your network. You will write down these names and your shared connections with these people on your Networking Tracker.

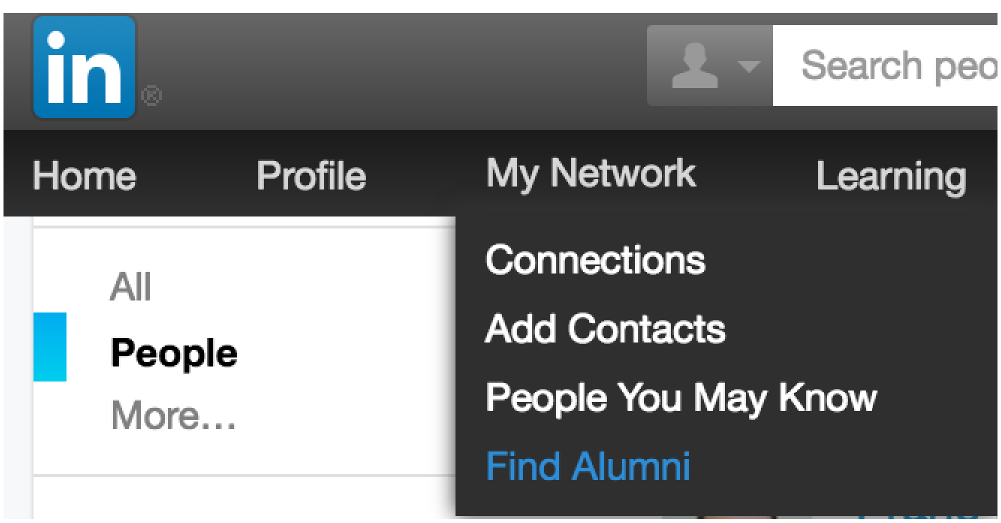




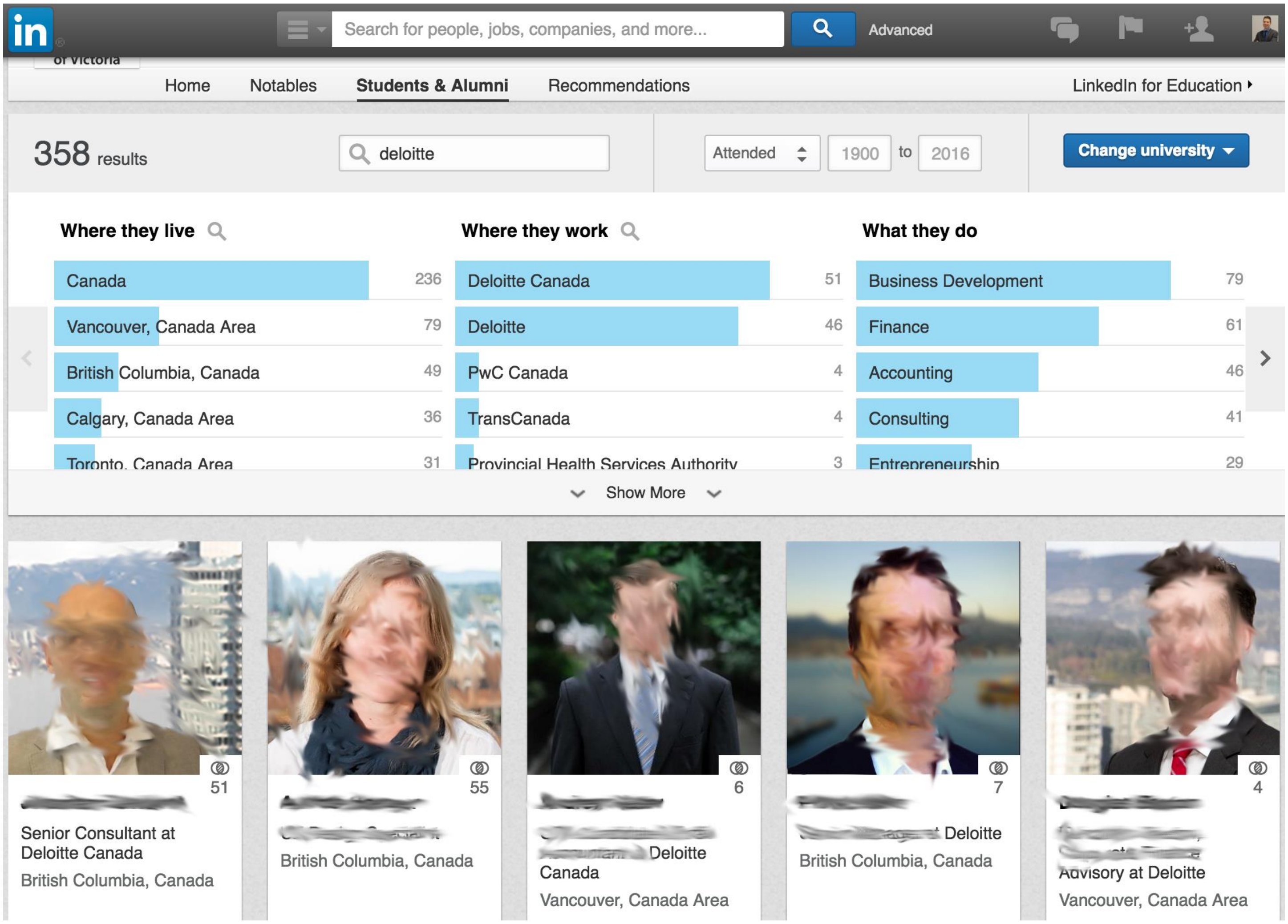
Finding Alumni Connections

Another LinkedIn feature that goes unnoticed by many is the *Find Alumni* search tool under the *My Network* dropdown list at the top of the page. As long as you have listed all the educational institutions you have attended in your LinkedIn profile, you will be able to toggle between these networks to see who in your alumni has worked for a certain company or industry. Your alumni network is among your most powerful tools in your networking journey. I have found that fellow alumni tend to go above and beyond for me when I reach out to them on LinkedIn. It's very common to have shared connections with alumni so it serves as an excellent platform for making new networking connections.

Here is where you can locate the *Find Alumni* search tool:



Here is an example of search results for alumni connected to Deloitte:



Outside of Your Network

If you are having trouble finding connections or shared connections with a certain company – fear not. More and more organizations have corporate directories on their website that include the names, positions, phone numbers and email addresses of decision makers. Look for the highest level contact in an area of interest to you (e.g. marketing, accounting, finance, operations) and take note of their name and contact information in your Networking Tracker.

Here are some examples of high level position titles that you can look for:

- C-level managers (e.g. CEO, CFO, COO)
- VP
- Director
- Manager
- Partner

I would not recommend HR personnel as the first point of contact when trying to reach out to someone outside of your network. HR personnel are more likely to direct you to the job board on the company's corporate website to apply and are unlikely to connect you with someone that you can make an impression with in person.

Outside of corporate websites you can take a look at industry association websites that sometimes list people and their contact details that are not available on corporate websites. Relevant names and contact information from these websites should also be added to your tracker.

Going back to LinkedIn, you can also find profiles in your search results where you have no common connections. If you lack a company connection or shared connection, you can add a few profiles from your search result based on job title and location.

Now that you have identified people in the organizations you want to connect with, it's time to tap into your network.

Your Goal

Your goal is to land an *informational interview*. This is not an interview for an open position at the company your contact works at or a direct sales pitch. It's a meeting for the following reasons:

1. Gather information about the contact's industry and career progression
2. Generate leads to connect with other professionals in the industry
3. Seek guidance on how to break into the industry

This approach might seem counter-intuitive at first. You might ask *"Why spend the time meeting people when I'm not going to get a job out of it? Wouldn't I be better off actually applying for jobs online?"*

To answer the first question, you are not looking to get a job out of that informational interview directly. But you are from the overall networking system and the informational interview is a crucial piece of the process.

On the second question, I can say confidently that you are not better off simply sending your application through the proverbial black hole (aka job boards). At least not without starting conversations and making meaningful connections first.

The great thing about tapping into your own network (your direct contacts) is that you have people endorsing you when an introduction is made on your behalf. Because of this, you have already established a degree of social capital with the person to whom you are being introduced. This can go a long way in having that person take time out of their busy day to speak with you and possibly help you in finding a career opportunity. Does this always lead to an interview? No, but it's a numbers game and, through deliberate practice, you can become a Networking Master and turns the odds forever in your favour!

How about if I don't know the contact that well?

Over the years I had been surprised by how I have found the best employment opportunities. People closest in my network that have even offered to help me network previously sometimes have stonewalled me. Conversely, there have been people I have been out of touch with for years that, when I came knocking, they quickly became invested in my job search and helped connect me with the right people in my preferred industry. I've learned that how close you are to a direct contact is not necessarily correlated with how willing they will be to help you in your search. So it is important not to shy away from contacting people you haven't been in touch with for years on the assumption they would be unwilling to help you out.

Connecting with a Direct Contact

So how do you approach your network? There are a few different ways.

1. **In a social setting**

This is the one I prefer. I had the opportunity to reconnect with family, friends as well as former classmates and coworkers when I returned from exchange in Costa Rica. The fact I was away finishing my degree and had stories (and photos too!) from the trip were great reasons to reconnect and catch up. In the process I would mention my next steps – finding a job in my desired industry and applying my education to good use. I would ask if they knew of anyone I could connect with to learn more about the industry or potential opportunities. I would also have my business cards handy so my contact information would be handy for my network to disseminate in the event an opportunity came to their attention.

2. **Through an email or social media message**

This was another method I used that led to a few informational interviews with possible employers. I would write a short email to someone in my network I did not have the opportunity to connect with yet. I would send them an email along these lines:

"

Hi [contact],

I hope this email finds you well.

It's been a while since we last spoke. I recently returned from an amazing adventure in Costa Rica on exchange where I finished up my MBA. I'm back in town looking for new employment opportunities. It would be great to catch up over a coffee – I would like to hear how you have been and tell you more about my time abroad.

Would Sunday at 11am or Tuesday at 2pm work?

Looking forward to catching up,

Phil

"

There are a few things I did in that pitch to keep in mind when creating your own:

- I mention something that would potentially interest the reader to meet with me to learn more (my travels)
- I set the context that I am on the lookout for employment
- I show interest in the other person and want to hear how they have been and what they have been up to
- I do not ask IF they can meet, I ask WHEN they can meet and provide two options for them to choose from. This will vastly improve your chances that your direct contact will accept a meeting with you.

3. A phone call

This is the traditional way of rekindling a direct contact. It's also the best way. Many people do not check their email or social media daily. Even when they do, they may just file your message away as a "to do" at a later time. If you have a contact's phone number, start off with a phone call and see if you can connect. It's always easier to show your enthusiasm and interest with your voice rather than your text. It's also harder for someone to decline to meet you if you have them on the phone as there is a greater sense of obligation when speaking with someone rather than by email.

If you are unable to get a hold of a contact this way, follow up with an email 24 hours later. You can follow the template I wrote above and be sure to include that you called them and that this is a follow up email. Persistence is very important when it comes to connecting with someone. The more effort you show, the great likelihood someone will make the time to meet you.

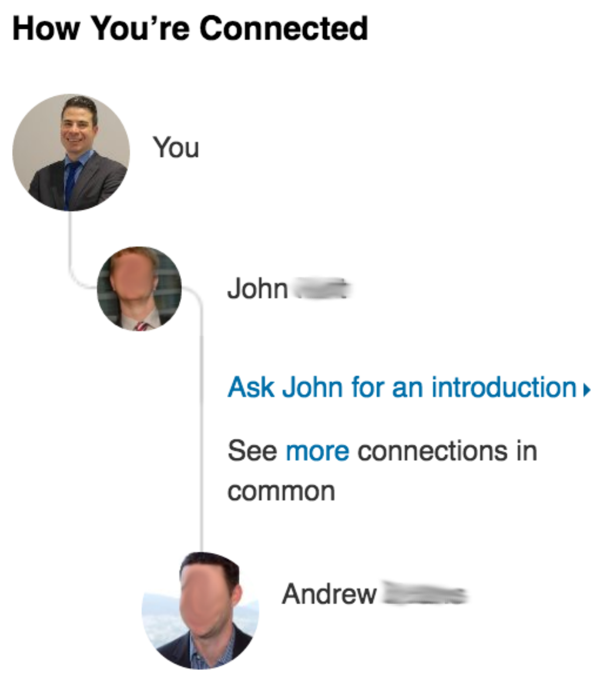
Connecting with a Shared Connection

To connect with a shared connection, you will need to make your pitch to your connection to make an introduction on LinkedIn. There are three reasons you can use to ask for this introduction:

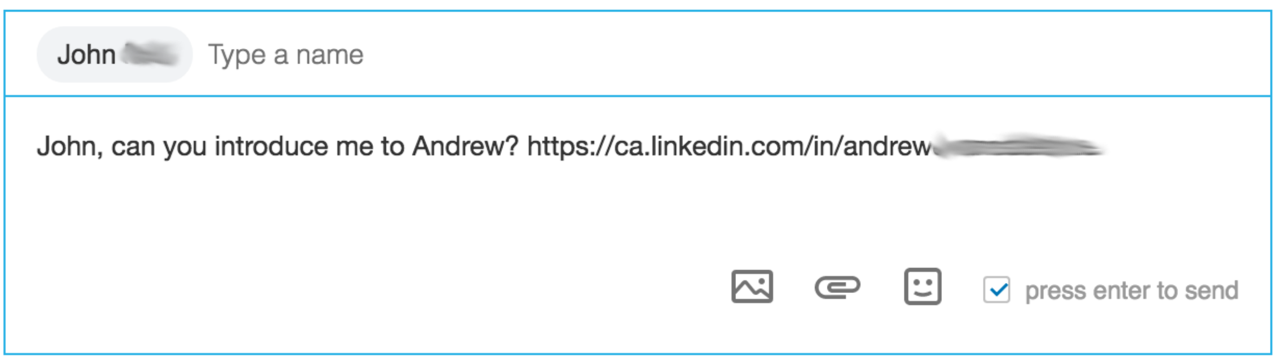
1. You want to learn more about the shared connection's industry
2. You want to learn more about how the shared connection got their start in the industry
3. You want to learn more about the shared connection's current role

Do you see a common theme here? The reasons you are asking for the introduction has nothing to do with you – it has everything to do with **THEM**. You are asking to give the share connection a platform to talk about themselves. Showing interest is paying someone a compliment. Most people enjoy talking about themselves and like to feel they are giving back. This is the perfect opportunity for them to do both!

To request an introduction on LinkedIn, go to the shared connection's profile. On the right hand side of the screen you will see a list of your connections in common:



Select one of the connections in common and you will be prompted by the following message box:



Remove the generic question that LinkedIn has provided to you. Keep the hyperlink to the shared connection's LinkedIn profile as it will be a convenient reference for your connection to use in the event they do not recall the person immediately.

Here is a sample pitch letter for an introduction:

“

Hi John,

I hope this email finds you well.

It's been a while since we last spoke. Congrats on your new job – how is everything going with that?

I recently returned from exchange in Costa Rica where I finished up my MBA. I'm back in town now looking for new employment opportunities.

I noticed you are connected with Andrew from Deloitte. I am looking to learn more about Deloitte and the consulting industry. Andrew seems to have quite impressive experience and it would be great to learn more about his career path.

Would it be possible to make an introduction via LinkedIn?

Best regards,

Phil

”

I find in the majority of cases that your direct contact will make the introduction. In cases where your direct contact is not able to connect you, if you have another connection that can make the introduction, start the process again with them. If you don't have another connection, you can ask if they know of anyone else they can connect you with in the industry. It's hard for people to refuse a smaller request after rejecting the initial one. This can create "something out of nothing" - an opportunity for you to make a worthwhile connection.

Connecting with a Person with No Shared Connection

If you have found contact information on a corporate website or industry association, I recommend you email the contact as it allows you to frame your message to your liking and gives them time to respond. LinkedIn also has a service called *LinkedIn Premium* that allows you to send a certain number of direct messages a month to anyone's profile. So if you lack a shared connection, this is going to be another weapon in your arsenal. LinkedIn offers its premium service free on a one-month trial. I used their premium service towards the end of my last job search and no longer required it as I had been given a job offer. I found one month gives you a good sense of how useful it will be as a networking tool. I ended up connecting with a couple people through LinkedIn Premium and gathered some good information. You will have to determine if the monthly price tag of $60 a month is worth it to you. Given that the average job search takes between 6 and 8 weeks, I would have paid the $60 for the second month of my search if needed.

When you connect with someone you are not familiar with, you will have to give a bit more context for your email. At the same time, you don't want to write a novel and have their eyes glaze over. You need to strike a balance between being succinct and informative. Once again, you will need to appeal to their interests to connect with you. You need to always answer the question "What's in it for them?" To talk about themselves and be helpful of course!

Here is a sample pitch letter to someone that I have no shared connections with:

“

Hello Beatrice,

My name is Phil Cawdery, a recent MBA graduate from the University of Victoria. I came across your profile on [LinkedIn/corporate or industry association website]. I am passionate about the consulting industry and see that you *have over 15 years experience in the field. It would be great if you have time to meet to have a discussion about your career path and what it's like working in consulting and at Deloitte.*

I am also located in Vancouver and am available to meet at a time and location that is convenient for you.

Do you have availability to meet next week?

Best regards,

Phil

”

Because I did not have a shared connection with Beatrice nor had I spoken to her previously, I chose to ask about her availability for a given time span (next week) rather than providing two options for a meeting. It's important not to come across as presumptuous when sending an email or social media message to someone you have not met before. I still framed the message as an opportunity for her to tell me about herself and her career rather than asking her to do something for me (e.g. to provide names of contacts or to tell me about possible upcoming job opportunities).

Outside of the Box: Social Media Broadcast

If you find you are going through a bit of a slump in connecting with industry professionals, you can broadcast that you are looking for employment opportunities on your social media platforms. This should not be limited to LinkedIn. Leverage other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You never know where a great opportunity might be lurking.

Your social media message should look something like this:

“

Hi everyone! I am currently on my job search to find an opportunity in consulting or in the public sector. If you know of any opportunities or contacts you can put me in touch with to learn more about these industries, it would be much appreciated. You can send me a private message to let me know.

”

Because you are not directly asking someone for an employment opportunity, you can post this type of update and it will not impact your overall networking strategy of *connecting with the right people*, *starting a conversation* and *uncovering hidden job opportunities* through developing professional relationships.

SET UP THE MEETING

Congratulations for getting this far in your networking journey! You've gotten the green light from either a shared connection or someone you reached out independently to meet. So now what?

Logistics

Well there are a couple of logistics that you need to nail down. Firstly, make sure you find a convenient time and location for your contact. Remember, it's about making this meeting about *them* as much as possible. A coffee shop is the ideal place to meet. Occasionally, your contact will ask to meet at their office which is also fine. It's possible your contact will provide their contact information to you. However, this is not always the case, especially if you don't have an established connection with them. Even if this is the case, you should *always* provide your phone number for them to reach you in the event they are running late or are having trouble finding you at the location.

Attire

I get asked a lot by people I help with their job search: *"What should I wear?"* Like any good consultant, my answer is that it depends. If you are meeting at a coffee shop, you can probably tone down your attire and keep it business casual (e.g. a dress shirt/blouse with no blazer or tie). Even if you meet your contact at their office, for the majority of cases, business casual is acceptable. The exceptions to this rule are for top tier Big Fish in upper echelon industries such as investment banking, private equity and management consulting. For those companies, suiting up is the way to go. In cases where you are uncertain what is appropriate to wear, always err on the side of caution and dress more formally.

Preparation

World famous auto racer Bobby Unser once said "Success is where opportunity and preparation meet." I wholeheartedly agree. By utilizing this networking system, I managed to secure an informational interview with a top consulting firm in Canada. Even with no guarantees for this meeting to lead to something bigger for my career, I prepared for this meeting as if it were the most important interview of my life. It turned out it was crucial in my career journey.

To be as prepared as possible, there are 3 things you need to do prior to your meeting:

1. Research your contact
2. Research the organization
3. Come ready with insightful questions

Research Your Contact

When you research your contact, your objective is twofold: find out more about their career path and find points of commonality between the two of you. By doing this, you will generate insightful questions, start a conversation and begin the process of forging a meaningful professional relationship. LinkedIn is a gold mine for find out more information on your contact. Even if you are not directly connected to them, you can usually see their work history and education. Make mental notes on any points of commonality in these areas. Also, look for trends in their work history – does their path appear like a linear progression? Or does it look like they made a career shift at some point? These trends will allow you to generate insightful questions into their career journey.

Another way you can research your contact is through running a search of their name on Google and Google News. This will bring up any news articles where they are cited or any publications to which they have contributed. These nuggets of information are fair game to raise in your informational interviews. It shows you have done your homework and you are genuinely interested in what they are doing and how they got to where they are in their careers today.

One area to be careful when researching are aspects of the contact's personal life. Finding information on their Facebook page or a non-career oriented website is not good subject matter to bring to your meeting. This shows that you have taken your research too far and you might make them feel uncomfortable with this type of off-topic discussion. However, if your contact has listed on LinkedIn that they do volunteer work or sit on a board of directors, these are great areas for discussion.

Research the Organization

Researching the contact's organization is just as critical for your meeting. The organization's corporate website is always a good starting point. Take a look at their service or product offerings, their About page and anything to do with corporate vision and values cited on the website. Another good way of gathering information on the organization is from industry reports – taking a look at where they are in industry rankings, areas they have performed especially strongly in and their competition.

Come with insightful questions

From your research, you should be able to generate more insightful questions than you know what to do with! Here are some examples of good informational interview questions you can raise:

- How did you get your start in your career?
- I noticed you made a career shift a few years ago to this industry, how did you make that shift?
- What are the things you like best about your industry and job?
- What are some of the key challenges you face in your job?
- I noticed we both graduated from the same university. What was the MBA program like when you attended university? Did Professor Brown teach economics then as well?
- I noticed on your corporate website that a few of the company's values are Integrity, Sustainability and Collaboration. Can you tell me a bit more about how the organization puts these values into practice?
- I read that your organization is one of the Top 3 financial institutions in the country. What were the keys to driving growth and positioning your organization for that kind of success?
- What are some trends you have seen or some areas of opportunity in your industry?
- What advice would you give to someone looking to break into the industry?
- Are there any designations or certifications that would be useful to succeed in this field?

One thing to remember: be careful not to ask questions that have to do with confidential company information. Questions to do with typical salaries for positions in the organization, specific business they are trying to generate behind the scenes or financial questions if the company is not publicly traded and does not release financial reports publicly are off limits. These questions will likely make your meeting a bit awkward and are counterproductive to creating a conversation. A good rule of thumb for these questions is if you are uncertain your question is out of bounds – do not ask the question. You should have plenty of other good questions to work with before your meeting.

During your meeting, remind yourself beforehand and during your interaction to always come across as personable and enthusiastic. Smile naturally, make good eye contact, try to stay relaxed yet professional. Remind yourself that this is just a conversation to learn more, you are well prepared and that there is no need to put any pressure on yourself. Make sure you are 10 minutes early for your meeting. This will allow you to gather your thoughts and composure. The worst feeling in the world is rushing to a meeting worrying that you will be late while you begin to perspire.

I've provided a list below of some of the most important DO'S and DON'TS in an informational interview. Let's start with the DON'TS.

<u>DON'TS</u>

- **DON'T** treat the meeting like an actual interview
- **DON'T** ask them for a job
- **DON'T** offer your business card or ask for theirs – you both already know how to get in touch
- **DON'T** make the conversation about yourself. Limit the time talking about yourself
- **DON'T** take too much of their time. Aim for a 20 to 30 minute conversation
- DON'T make the meeting a sales pitch. Remember to stay humble
- **DON'T** ask if they can put you in touch with a hiring manager

<u>DO's</u>

- **DO** make sure you thank them for their time at the beginning of the meeting
- **DO** offer to buy them a coffee
- **DO** ask only questions you are genuinely interested in learning more about
- **DO** mention you are currently on a job search
- **DO** actively listen so you can learn and have references to the meeting during your follow up
- **DO** ask for advice on how to break into the industry
- **DO** ask if they can take a look at your resume after the meeting via email. Make sure you emphasize that this is purely for review purposes only to ensure it is tailored for the industry. Only provide a resume that you have already spent time revising and have had at least one other person review
- **DO** ask if they think there is anyone else you can speak to in the industry to learn more
- **DO** make sure to show your passion for the industry and their organization
- **DO** make sure you thank them again for their time at the end of the meeting

I've found when I do all these things, 4 out of 5 times the contact offers, without being asked, to either connect me with someone else in the industry or put me in touch with someone within their organization about a job opportunity. When the contact sees you are well prepared, informed and likeable, they are far more likely to want to help you out. When offered, let them know you appreciate their help and that it's something you are definitely interested in. Make sure you don't simply just say "OK" or "Sure" – show your appreciation and interest in how they are going out of their way to help you.

INITIAL FOLLOW UP

After your meeting, it's crucial that you follow up with the contact to thank them again for their time and highlight your takeaways from your conversation. This follow up has to be on the same day as the meeting. I have found there's a big drop off in a contact's willingness to connect me with other people or to provide a job opportunity when I've sent my follow up to them even the next day.

I recommend you do your follow up in written form – either by email or a LinkedIn message. This allows you to put your thoughts together and to convey all your takeaways from the meeting. It's also less inundating to the contact to receive a written follow up than a phone call. Avoid text messages as they come across as less professional and are less readable when longer.

In this follow up make sure you:

1. Thank them again for their time
2. Mention what you've learned about the industry
3. Mention you are now more enthused than ever to break into the industry
4. If the contact offered to put you in touch with other contacts or provide a lead on a job opportunity, thank them for this as well. It will serve as a remind to them to follow through on their word and take action

Here is a sample of what this follow up would look like:

"

Hello Beatrice,

I want to thank you again for the time you took out of your busy day to meet me. It was great meeting you and learning more about your career path and the work you do KPMG. I was particularly impressed learning about KPMG's strategic focus on building their technology consultancy division to respond to changing trends in management consulting. I am even more excited to break into the consulting industry after learning about the type of work you do and the positive impact you make for your clients.

I appreciate the offer to take a look at my resume and provide some feedback. I have attached it in this email.

I look forward to staying in touch.

Best regards,

Phil

”

If your contact has pointed you towards a job posting to apply to while they connect you with a decision maker for that position, make sure you let them know that you have already submitted your application. You want to show that you are proactive and make their efforts to help you as easy as possible. Below I show you how you should frame your meeting in your cover letter addressing a job posting.

In your cover letter it's imperative that you mention:

1. Your network experience with your company contact
2. The research you've done on the company
3. Your enthusiasm to serve the organization
4. What value you bring to the organization

Ultimately, the cover letter is about why the company should hire you rather than why you want to work for the company. At the same time, you need to show you've done your research and have been proactive to learn more through networking (without actually mentioning the word networking).

Here is a sample first paragraph to highlight these points:

“

Dear Hiring Manager [Use their name if provided to you or cited in the job posting],

I came across your career opportunity for a Project Coordinator position and it caught my attention. I have over 5 years of working on projects in both support and coordinating roles and feel this position is a great opportunity to serve your organization. I recently had the opportunity to speak with Vivien Kosis, an Account Manager in your Vancouver office to learn more about Access Communications and the sales industry. I was impressed to learn that your company is a leader in political advertising in Canada and was recently named a top 50 "Best Places to Work" by McLean's magazine. Based on my previous sales and advertising experience at Bell Canada, and my background in Political Science, I believe I will be able to add value for Access Communications and its clients from Day 1…

”

A cover letter is only effective if it is tailored to the role and your knowledge of the organization. Being able to show you have already networked with someone in the organization puts you on their radar.

Building a professional relationship and connection does not end with your first follow up and job application. This is just the beginning of foster a meaningful professional relationship.

Two weeks from your meeting, it’s time to reconnect! This is especially important if the contact is not already assisting you with your job search. And this message does not have to be a lengthy update at all. It is simply a check-in with your contact to tell them how your job search is going and to see if they can help you out again.

A great way to initiate contact again is to send them a relevant news article related to their industry or a resource, something of interest to contact. This update can also serve as an opportunity to update your contact that you applied to a job posting with their organization or to ask if they can connect you with anyone else.

Why would someone that has already helped me want to help me again?

It might sound counterintuitive but if someone has already helped you, they are actually *more* likely to help you again! This is known as the *Ben Franklin Effect:* a person who has performed a favor for someone is more likely to do another favor for that person than they would be if they had received a favor from that person. So don’t be shy about reaching out to see if they can help you again.

Here is a sample of a second follow up:

“

Hello John,

I came across an informative article that I thought might interest you about the top trends in technology projected over the next 5 years: <link>.

I’ve been continuing my job search in IT transformation. Your advice has been very helpful in learning more about the field and how to frame my experience in my resume. I was wondering if you know of anyone else you could connect me with in IT transformation to learn more about the industry and their career paths?

Thanks,

Phil

”

This second follow up provides an opportunity to rekindle the chance that this contact will take action to help you land your dream job.

So there you have it – that's my networking system to help you land your dream job! Cycle through this system and great things will happen for you.

I would really appreciate any feedback you have on my eBook so I can incorporate your advice into future eBooks.

Please send your feedback to p.cawdery@alumni.ubc.ca

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR NETWORKING AND CAREER JOURNEY!