Building your network

We've given you methods and tools for finding professionals working in your fields of interest. What are you doing right now to create or establish those important professional relationships? **Meeting people gives you an opportunity to learn from them.** If you are not sure what career path you would like to pursue, talk with many different professionals... they can help you narrow your areas of interest. (Read more about the first step to building your own personal network, informational interviewing, on pages 23-25.) Remember, networking should begin long before your job search and often you don’t even realize that you are doing it!

**Networking is usually an informal discussion with people you already know**, or have just met. In fact, most students use networking all the time without even realizing it. When scheduling classes, have you ever asked a friend or classmate about their experiences, or to recommend a good class or section? When making a (relatively) large purchase such as a new cell phone, athletic shoes, computer, or even a car, have you asked people you know what they’ve liked or disliked about theirs? Have you posted questions (or answers) to social media discussing these kinds of topics? Guess what—that’s networking!

**Networking takes place whenever you:**
- Meet with faculty or staff—especially a Career Advisor (see pages 6-7)
- Attend an employer event, career fair or MSU workshop (Handshake has a list of all these opportunities)
- Meet guest speakers or engage with your peers in class or through a student organization
- Talk with family, friends, and other acquaintances about their work
- Post messages on Facebook, LinkedIn, other websites, and blogs
- Volunteer for a community service event

Since networking can happen anywhere, be prepared to introduce yourself and deliver your pitch about who you are and what you want to do. For some students, this often happens at their part-time job in conversations with customers and clients. “You’re a student at MSU? What are you studying? What do you want to do after graduation?” You never know when that conversation can lead to a new contact or even an invitation to pass along your resume!

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that up to 80% of positions are filled without employer advertising.
Using Social Media

✓ LinkedIn, Facebook & Twitter

Your Career Services Network at MSU is prepared to help you understand the importance of social media in your career development. Here is a quick overview of several social media web-tools you may want to consider using.

▶ LinkedIn. Why bother with LinkedIn?
  - internships & job postings
  - research grad schools
  - research employers
  - maintain professional connections
  - career related news & information

▶ Sign up at LinkedIn.com/reg/join
  - Photo – doesn’t have to be fancy
  - Headline – who you are and what you want to do
  - Summary – what motivates you? What are you good at?
  - Experience – don’t hold back, list it all!
  - Skills – try to list 5-10 skills
  - Courses – focus on those related to your career interests

▶ Facebook. Yes, employers and professionals are on Facebook too. Even if you don’t choose to add professional contacts as friends, be aware that employers (and your future colleagues) are very likely to look you up on Facebook or Google you before you even come in for an interview. If you like the idea of using Facebook for both personal and professional reasons, search pages and groups for field or employer specific info or communities. Also consider using your status updates strategically to help your network of friends help you.

▶ Twitter. Stay updated with professionals or employers and keep others up to date with this instant information tool. Use Twitter directories like WeFollow.com and Twellow.com to find professionals and organizations related to your interests that you may want to follow. Many organizations have Twitter accounts dedicated to job postings.

✓ Career Services Network & Social Media

▶ Visit CareerNetwork.msu.edu/services-locations/social-media.html to find a list of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts managed by Career Services staff and Career Peers.

▶ SpartanLinks is a group on LinkedIn that connects MSU students to alumni working in their areas of interest. Alumni who join are looking to share insight, advice, and expertise with students and recent graduates. Student, alumni, and employer members within this main group discuss general career topics such as resume writing, interviewing, job search strategies, workplace trends, and employment/recruiting trends.

▶ The MSU Alumni Association also has a large LinkedIn group that students can join to connect with other alumni. In addition, many regional MSU Alumni Clubs have LinkedIn groups specifically for those living and working in that area. If you are planning to relocate or are looking for an internship in a particular area, these groups can be useful resources!

▶ MSU departments and student organizations often have social media accounts that you can join. This is where you can make connections with people who share your interests plus often learn about student jobs, visiting employers and other career-related information. Check out the MSU Social Media Directory at msu.edu/social/