

**University of Miami
School of Law**



NETWORKING GUIDE

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I. INTRODUCTION -- THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

Approximately 60-80% of jobs are part of the “hidden job market.” These jobs are never advertised; include vacancies that are about to occur; and are ultimately filled through word of mouth. Since hiring someone is a risk, employers would prefer to interview and retain someone who they know personally, or who comes recommended by someone they trust.

In order to find out about these jobs, you need to be in the information loop. How do you get into the loop? By contacting people you know *and* people you are willing to meet. That is why networking is not only important, but essential, in any job search. It is an integral part of the job search process because it is the most successful way to find a position, and it is the most utilized method of recruiting by most employers. Each contact can lead to additional unexpected contacts, if you ask the right questions and know how to effectively "network." Advice, information and referrals are all outcomes of proper networking and invaluable tools for a job search. As such, students should start a network early in their law school careers.

II. WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is an art – the more you do it, the better at it you will become. Networking is about relationships, building professional contacts and having those contacts get to know you and your goals. It is a process centered around obtaining information on strategies for achieving your career goals, advice and referrals **WITHOUT DIRECTLY ASKING FOR A JOB**. Additionally, in many instances, networking can lead to an actual job.

III. PURPOSES OF NETWORKING

- To develop contacts and to obtain knowledge about a particular practice, specialty area, firm or company, or legal community;
- To discover how to arrive at your specific career goals, narrow your career choices and establish an agenda to help you get there;
- To assist you with information about a career change;
- To obtain additional leads to jobs and other career-related information;
- To validate your choice of career by speaking to someone who actually works in that field; and
- To practice your interviewing skills.

IV. THE GOALS OF NETWORKING

- To meet someone who will either refer you to a potential employer, **OR** ultimately hire you for a position.
- To build strategic partnerships or relationships that will assist you in the future with your business and career choices and development.

V. IDENTIFYING YOUR NETWORK

Proper networking involves a wide array of people and sources (not just attorneys), such as your parents, other relatives, friends, previous and current employers and co-workers, career counselors, professors, law school administrators, previous and current classmates, college and law school alumni, acquaintances from church or community groups and individuals you deal with on a regular basis (e.g., your doctor, dentist and banker). Even if these sources cannot direct you to a job, they may be able to assist you with your resume, cover letter or interviewing skills; clarify your goals; provide you with emotional support; and provide you with important information regarding career development.

VI. THREE-STEP GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Step 1: DEVELOP YOUR CONTACTS

- **Volunteer**

Volunteering with government agencies, public interest organizations and judges is an excellent way to develop professional contacts because you are exposed to practitioners on a daily basis. Volunteering also increases marketability and sharpens legal skills. Additionally, graduates gain permanent employment with organizations after completing voluntary positions with them.

- **Become Active in Bar Associations and Attend CLE Courses**

Bar association functions present many opportunities to build professional relationships. Most state bar associations have "Law Student" sections and offer reduced membership rates. When you attend bar association events, you are in direct contact with the people you most want to speak with about your job search—practicing attorneys. If you are interested in a particular area of law, seek out specialty groups (e.g., the Intellectual Property Lawyers Association). Bar associations also sponsor continuing legal education ("CLE") classes which provide a tutorial on substantive legal issues and present the perfect forum in which to meet fellow attendees, and the judges and practitioners who serve as panelists.

- **Professional and Trade Associations; Civic/Religious/Social Organizations; Student On-Campus Organizations**

It is also a good idea to become active in professional or trade associations. As you become acquainted and involved with people in various community organizations, such as your church or the local chamber of commerce, you can also network your way into your ideal setting.

As a law student, you have the opportunity to become a member of several different on-campus student groups which coordinate presentations and events. Even if you do not join any particular student group, be aware of all the lectures, panel discussions, workshops and other activities scheduled at the law school, and make it a point to attend and mingle.

- **Attend Social and Professional Events**

Do not underestimate the value of a social function for networking purposes. It is surprising how meeting someone at a cocktail party, wedding, luncheon, dinner party or golf game can lead to a conversation and, ultimately, to an opportunity. If you attend or participate in a social activity, ask a friend or the host of the specific function to introduce you to the other guests/participants. You can also introduce yourself, talk and ask questions. Small talk about what you do, and sincere questions about the other person's life and career, can start the ball rolling. If you sense that someone is turned off when you begin to discuss work, you should immediately change the subject. However, if all goes well, and you feel a rapport develop, you can end the conversation by exchanging business cards or phone numbers and by expressing your interest in speaking to the contact or getting together in the future. You can then follow up in a couple of weeks by inviting the person to lunch.

- **Contact Alumni**

Contact UM alumni, as well as alumni from your undergraduate institution. You can find fellow attorney alumni by doing an advanced search on the Martindale-Hubbell website (www.martindale.com), or by using the NALP Employer Directory (www.nalpdirectory.com). These contacts are typically more comfortable to make because you share a similar educational background with them.

- **Job/Career Fairs**

Job and career fairs are events designed to unite the best job candidates with the respective employers. Career fairs can also be informational, insofar as they invite different organizations and firms from different practice areas and settings to a specific locale to speak with students on a one-to-one basis about career goals and how to achieve them.

These fairs are typically coordinated by consortium organizations, colleges and also law schools. They are ideal for networking (even the informational fairs) because potential employers are present exactly for the purpose of recruiting suitable people and/or giving the necessary information about their organization. It is a tremendous opportunity to network with several different individuals in a short period of time and with little effort. The University of Miami School of Law participates in numerous job fairs with other law schools and organizations. You can see a comprehensive list of these job/career fairs at <http://www.law.miami.edu/cdo/current/jobfairs.html>.

- **Write Letters**

You can generate networking contacts using legal periodicals, such as the Daily Business Review and the Florida Bar Journal. Keep up with current events to see who is active in the areas of law that interest you. Write to them to say that you read about their work, share an interest in the field and would like to meet with them for an informational interview.

- **The Internet**

The Internet can assist you with mailing lists, chat groups, bulletin boards and newsgroups for your individual needs.

- **Classmates; Family, Friends, and Acquaintances; Former Employers and Colleagues; Professors**

Check in with your law school, college (or high school) friends to make contacts who might be able to provide guidance. Let your family and friends know that you are looking for contacts and information. Call former employers for information and more contacts. Professors whom you know, and for whom you have done good work, will usually be glad to recommend you.

- **Headhunters**

Headhunters often know a great deal about private law firms and companies. Although they usually work with more experienced attorneys, they can be a good networking resource at times.

Step 2: INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An informational interview is an invaluable tool for obtaining information about career choices, learning more about an area of practice and finding a job. It can be one of the best ways to learn about a particular practice area or specialty while, at the same time, making potential contacts and networking.

Informational interviewing involves gathering career information from people who already work in the target occupations, organizations and geographic locations that interest you. It also gives you an opportunity to obtain suggestions and advice regarding their practice area, the legal community within their geographic region and the best ways to achieve your goals. It is a "quick" mentoring session which can also lead to an actual mentoring relationship. **It is not a job interview, although it may eventually lead to a job offer.**

Some of the benefits of informational interviewing are that it:

- allows you to determine whether the career, industry or company matches your skills, interests and expectations;
- confirms information that you have read and provides information not available in written form;
- assists you in organizing your future job search by revealing the best ways to get into the profession;
- provides you with tips and information about the job and career field that could be of great value in preparing applications for work and in job interviews;
- gives you an opportunity to see the organization from the inside.

▪ **Informational Interview Guide**

Be prepared. Prepare well in advance. You might begin with a self-assessment. The better you know yourself, the more likely you will pursue a career that is both enjoyable and rewarding. Then, conduct a thorough search for information about the careers that interest you, and on any organization you intend to contact.

Set up an interview. Once you know who you want to interview with,

- e-mail or write the person you wish to interview well before the date the interview would take place;
- introduce yourself and explain who you are (e.g., a first-year law student);
- state the type of work you are interested in researching, the reason why and the amount of time it would take to conduct the interview (usually 20 - 30 minutes);
- thank the person for speaking with you and confirm the date, time and location of the interview.

Pave the way. When you network outside of your inner-circle, give the contact a good reason to talk with you. An easy way to do this is to:

- Ask the referring person to call ahead, or
- Ask the referring person if you could use their name as an ice-breaker at the top of a contact letter or e-mail. For example, "Mary Smith suggested that I contact you."

Conducting the interview. After introducing yourself, stick to a short, but thoughtful list of questions. For example:

- Can you tell me about your experiences doing this type of work? ...about the path you took to get to this point?...about a typical day for you?
- What do you enjoy most about your work? What do you least enjoy?
- What recommendations would you give to someone interested in getting involved in this area of practice? Suggested courses?
- Should I emphasize different things in my resume or cover letter?
- What type of writing sample would you suggest including, if appropriate?
- Do you have any recommendations for additional people with whom I can speak regarding this?
- Thank you very much for your time and advice. It has been very helpful.

Step 3: FOLLOW UP

Always thank your contacts for the information they provide. A thank you letter detailing the steps you have taken since contacting them is sufficient. Also, do not be afraid to ask, "Who else should I be talking to?" in the letter. State your appreciation for the time the contact took to speak with you and for any referral names the contact gave to you. Finally, keep your contact aware of your progress from time to time.

VII. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR NETWORKING AND STAY ORGANIZED

Be organized. Maintain a log or some type of record of all your networking efforts. Remember, you are establishing contacts that you intend to have a while, not just momentarily to locate a job. At a minimum, this log should include:

- The name, address and telephone number of each contact;
- The name of the person who referred you to each contact;
- The date and time you last spoke with each contact, as well as the subject of the discussion and any follow-up that needs to be done;
- Any correspondence between you and each contact;
- The results of your interaction(s) with each contact;

You should also maintain:

- An up-to-the-minute calendar of critical dates;
- A "job search" file or notebook for contact and networking information, employer information, correspondence, phone calls, interview dates, thank-you notes, work experience and other activities;
- Updated copies of your cover letter, resume, transcripts, writing samples, and other materials on hand at all times (make sure to have good stationery for cover letters, resumes and thank-you letters);
- A card file and to attach any business cards you collect while networking.

VIII. GOLDEN RULES OF NETWORKING

- **Be Prepared and State Your Purpose Early.** Do research on the particular individual, organization and job you are interested in prior to meeting with your contact so that you can speak intelligently about what you want. Be prepared at your initial discussion and state your purpose. Give a quick summary of who you are and what you want (if the contact was referred to you by someone else). Also, have questions and topics ready to discuss.
- **Be Flexible.** Take into account the person's schedule and time limitations. Make sure that a person is available to speak with you when you make your initial contact. If he/she is not, ask when it would be a good time to speak to that person or to set up a meeting. Do not pressure anyone into speaking or meeting with you.
- **Never Ask For A Job.** Ask your contact for information and referrals, not for a job. Your contact will be more helpful if you ask her/him for things s/he is able to provide. Ask for information about career opportunities, advice, a critique of your resume, etc. Make the person feel at ease by immediately asking for information and advice - NOT A JOB! Your contact may have been burned in the past by people who claimed to be seeking information but asked for a job when the contact's defenses were down. The contact is not hiding jobs from you. If s/he is favorably impressed, s/he will be certain to pass on information about potential jobs to you.
- **Focus On Your Contact.** When you meet with a contact, focus on her/him, not on yourself and your needs. You have chosen these people for a good reason - they are working in the area you want to explore, they are employed by an organization you would love to work for, they live in the area of the country where you want to locate, etc. Ask them questions about themselves and soak up the information!
- **Be Courteous.** Listen attentively and respond intelligently. Do not overstay your welcome.
- **Give Positive Feedback and Follow-Up.** The contact has provided you with a valuable service. Make sure to acknowledge this both in person and in writing. After the meeting or discussion, follow-up with a thank-you letter and with the results of the information you obtained from the contact.

- **Exchange Business Cards.** Ask for a business card and attempt to maintain an ongoing relationship by asking whether you could contact the person in the future with questions. Do not repeatedly call your contact after the initial meeting. Whenever you meet someone new, exchange business cards. Even if you are a student or unemployed, you should have business cards printed for such occasions -- be sure to include your telephone number and e-mail address.
- **Keep Good Records.** Know with whom you spoke, when you spoke with them and the substance of the conversations. Then, when you contact them for a second or third time, you will not embarrass yourself by asking the same questions.
- **Do Not Blatantly Offer Your Resume.** Do not offer your resume for circulation to others, unless it is requested. However, you can ask for a critique of your resume (this is a good way to show your resume without pressuring the contact for a job).
- **Offer Assistance.** Always ask what you can do for your contact -- networking is a mutual relationship.

IX. RESPONSES TO COMMON NETWORKING QUESTIONS

I will not obtain a job through networking.

Approximately 20% of all job vacancies are advertised. The remaining 80% are filled by word of mouth. Networking is virtually the only way to find out about these openings. If you are not networking, you are missing out on many job opportunities.

What is the point of networking?

Faced with similar resumes, employers typically prefer to hire the candidate they know in some way other than the one that they know only in an interview setting.

I'm really shy, and don't like to mingle.

There are less intimidating settings than cocktail parties and receptions in which to network. Choose the networking methods in this guide which fit your personality.

Do mass mailings work?

Mass mailing is an easy way to communicate with employers you have never met because the blow of a rejection is muted. Sending out hundreds of letters at a time can also make you feel that you are doing something concrete and measurable in your job search. However, mass mailings usually generate a poor response rate. Consider the effort you must expend on following up on the letters that you produce, the cost of stamps and paper, and the time it takes to craft a proper cover letter. Networking is not quite as comfortable as sending out a mailing but it is more effective. You have to break out of your comfort zone to develop contacts, but networking gets you into the market rather than home in front of your computer churning out letters. Once you start networking, you will find it becomes easier with each new contact.

I can find my own job.

Networking *is* doing it on your own. You get yourself the job. There is no shame in relying on other people for information and assistance. When you enter practice, you realize how often people depend on their co-workers, former classmates and mentors for advice and information.

Sample Networking Letter Format

Return Address

Date

Name
Title
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

Paragraph 1 Establish your relationship to the recipient and explain why you are writing. Include a sentence or two about your strengths and interests. For example: As a student at the University of Miami School of Law, I am contacting you regarding international law opportunities in Los Angeles. I am a lifelong resident of California and intend to return to the area upon graduation in May 2009. I would value your opinion as to those individuals and/or organizations that would respond favorably to my background in the international law arena.

Paragraph 2 Describe your educational background and practical experience, and then link those experiences to your career interests. Explain what is appealing to you about the work that the recipient is doing and how it relates to your interests.

Paragraph 3 Mention that you will contact them “during the week of...” (usually within 2-3 weeks) – and then make sure to do so. If you will be in the area on a certain date, and can meet for an interview with the contact, let him/her know.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here
Type Your Name Here

SAMPLE NETWORKING LETTERS

Sample Networking Letter 1
Informational Interview Request -Alumni

Mary Smith
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

November 14, 2008

UM Alumni, Esq.
Associate Counsel
UM Law Firm
456 Main Street
Los Angeles, California 33333

Dear Mr. Alumni:

As a second-year student at the University of Miami School of Law, I am contacting you concerning international law opportunities in the Los Angeles area. Upon completing my Juris Doctor degree, I intend to move to the Los Angeles area, and work in this field. I would value your opinion as to those organizations that might respond favorably to my business and international law background.

As an undergraduate, I took courses in International Studies at the University of Southern California, and served as the President of the International Law Society on campus. My studies at the University of Miami School of Law have heightened my interest in international business transactions. Since your firm is a leader in international business litigation, I am interested in any information you could provide about such opportunities in the Los Angeles area.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review, and would appreciate any comments you may have for its improvement. I will contact your office the week of December 1st to discuss this in further detail. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Sample Networking Letter 2
Referral Informational Interview Request
Undergraduate Alumni

John Jones
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

November 14, 2008

UM Alumni, Esq.
Associate Counsel
UM Law Firm
456 Main Street
Los Angeles, California 33333

Dear Mr. Alumni:

I am a first-year student at the University of Miami School of Law, and a fellow graduate of the University of Southern California. I am considering concentrating my studies in alternative dispute resolution. In light of your recent article in *California Lawyers Weekly* regarding landlord/tenant mediation programs, I decided to write to you to request an informational interview.

Given your experience, I would be interested in tapping into your wealth of knowledge in this field. I would like to hear your perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of the practice area and its future potential, and obtain any insight you may have regarding opportunities within the field. I would appreciate any assistance you could offer in the form of an informational meeting, at your convenience.

As such, I have enclosed my resume for your review. Please feel free to contact me at (305) 123-4567. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Sample Networking Letter 3
Referral Informational Interview Request - Referral

John Jones
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

November 14, 2008

UM Referral, Esq.
Associate Counsel
UM Law Firm
456 Main Street
Los Angeles, California 33333

Dear Ms. Referral:

Professor Humpty Dumpty suggested that I contact you regarding environmental employment opportunities for lawyers in Los Angeles. As a lifelong resident of California, I intend to return to the Los Angeles area upon my graduation from the University of Miami School of Law in May 2011.

As an undergraduate at the University of Southern California, I had the opportunity to serve as an intern with the Office of the California Attorney General, Environmental Enforcement Division. In addition, during my second year of law school, I completed an internship with the Environmental/Water Resources Board. While these experiences have heightened my interest in environmental enforcement issues and the role of a lawyer in such offices, I am also interested in any information you can provide about potential positions in the private sector.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review and would appreciate any comments you may have for its improvement. I will call your office on Friday, December 30th to discuss this request further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Thank You Letter

**John Jones
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567**

November 14, 2008

Tom Smith, Esq.
Associate Counsel
UM Law Firm
456 Main Street
Los Angeles, California 33333

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to discuss your position as Environmental Associate. I am excited about the possibility of working in this field, and I know my graduate background in Environmental Law has prepared me to research, draft, and analyze the necessary issues and cases.

Based on your recommendations, I have contacted the environmental consulting group in San Francisco. Thank you again for your time. You have made the job search process considerably less arduous. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to you in the future.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

