

NETWORKING AND YOUR VIRTUAL IDENTITY

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide will help sharpen your networking skills and improve your online persona.



Georgia Tech
Career Center

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Online & In-Person Networking



According to LinkedIn, 85% of jobs are found through networking. Networking is important to building working relationships for each of your career moves. It is an excellent way to learn more about careers, industries, and positions, and whether or not they may be a career path to consider. You will also learn about someone's unique career path which may give you some new ideas for your career.

To create a specific virtual identity, you must identify how you want to be perceived by others. This can be done by showcasing your skills, talent, and work, showing interest in interacting with leaders in your field by interacting with their content (likes/reactions, comments, reposts). You may want to also consider building a personal website or github portfolio to showcase your projects and work.

While building your LinkedIn or other professional networking profile, it is important to remember that your other personal social media can be easily linked to your professional pages. Know that your professional reputation is being built everyday online so make sure that even your personal social media accounts are an accurate, appropriate reflection of you.

Getting Started

Identify Your Network

These potential contacts can be classmates, family, friends, professors. You can branch out and expand your networks through job fairs, career-related events, and other networking events. These contacts can be the key to your next opportunity. You can also find a GT alumni mentor through Mentor Jackets

Explore Your Options

If you have multiple areas of interest, decide which of those areas you'd like to explore in a work experience (i.e.: internship, co-op, research). This is an excellent time to either solidify your interest in continuing down a career path or take the time to explore other areas or opportunities.

Know Yourself

Think about your skills, interests, personality type, and your values. Take some time to reflect on each of these areas to get a better idea of careers you may be interested in pursuing.



Building Your Network & Networking Avenues

Start with GT colleagues and who you already know at GT and beyond (classmates, professors, family friends). Once you have tapped into this area, consider connecting with recent alumni and search institutional LinkedIn pages for potential connections; i.e. [Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts](#), [Scheller College of Business](#), [Georgia Institute of Technology](#). You can also look to connect with people from student organizations, clubs, honor societies, and professional organizations you are a part of. To increase success, send a personalized, brief message on LinkedIn when requesting to connect. Check [CareerBuzz](#) for career fairs, and networking events with alumni and/or industry professionals.

How to Leverage Your Contacts

▷ In-Person

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▷ Telephone/Virtual Calls

Use telephone or video calls to network with individuals who are not local to your area. When having these conversations, minimize noise and be aware of your background if you are using video. If needed, you can turn on a virtual background. Always clearly identify yourself, the reason you are calling, and give the name of who referred you, if applicable. Suggest a follow-up conversation to stay connected and if one is needed.

▷ Email

Emails are a great alternative if you are familiar with the contact. Send a message that uses professional language that clearly conveys your purpose for outreach. If you can, make some connections (i.e. you are in the program they graduated from, they are an alum from your current school). Use formal greetings, with the individual's name (Example: "Dear George Burdell") when addressing them via email. At the end, include a signature with your name, major, and contact information.

▷ Online

Visit www.gtmentorjackets.com/ today and find an alumni mentor who can help you with reaching your future career goals. Use LinkedIn to connect with professionals in your field. The LinkedIn Alumni tool allows you to filter alumni of your university by location, company, industry, among other listed filters. To locate GT alumni, follow [this link](#). Use the graphs or keyword searches to identify alumni that match your search preferences. [GT Connect](#) is also an excellent group of alumni that are centrally focused on giving back to current GT students.

Email & Outreach Messages

Reaching out to your network can feel like a daunting task because these may be your first interactions with potential connections, and you want to make a lasting impression. LinkedIn allows people to virtually interact when they attempt to make a connection online. To better the chances of your professional connections moving in the right direction, consider adding a personalized message to your connection request.



Dear Judge Klein,

I hope you are doing well. On LinkedIn, I saw that you are a Georgia Tech alum and serve as Superior Court Judge for Vermont Judiciary. As a current GT student, I am studying Economics and am considering going to law school to focus on criminal law. Would you be willing to speak with me briefly over the phone (15-20 minutes) to share with me your insight on what it is genuinely like to work in your field? I found your background as a former prosecutor and lawyer for the Department of Justice particularly fascinating. I was interested in hearing any advice you had on how I can make myself more competitive for this career path while I am still currently enrolled.

I am available every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after 2pm EST if that may work for your schedule. Thank you in advance for considering this request. I hope you have a wonderful week, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Jamal Stringer | Economics Major | May 2023

PRO TIP

Be aware of character limits when sending these personalized LinkedIn connection requests.

Handling Non-Responses

While you may be doing everything you can on your end to establish a connection, the reality is that some people may not be very responsive. There is no need for you to wait on a non-respondent. After initial outreach and 1-2 follow-ups, if you don't receive a response, put the outreach on hold for this person. Instead, continue outreach efforts to your target companies and reach out to at least 3 people at each organization at varying times (do not reach out to all of them simultaneously).

If you later find that multiple people at the same organization are non-responsive, that is excellent feedback to move on to another department, or another organization entirely.

In-Person Networking and Making Introductions

The hope is that you eventually meet your connections face to face, in person. In many cases for networking, it will be for information-gathering purposes. Before networking in any capacity, but especially in an in-person capacity, be sure to confirm any logistics (date, time, location, contact phone number) with those that you meet with to avoid any issues.

The most important piece for networking in any format will be to do your homework. Take plenty of time to conduct thorough research on the company and the position so that you are better prepared for future conversations with employer representatives.



Introductions and Engaging with Company Representatives

Your introduction will be one of the first impressions you make when speaking with an employer representative. They want to learn more about who you are, what you are accomplishing and your hopes for the future.

Listed below is the typical structure of an introduction you would use with an employer. Feel free to add in another area if you feel it is necessary to really highlight who you are as a working professional.

Who you are → What you've done/are doing → What you're excited about/next steps

1. Smile
2. State your name, major, and class year
3. Share information about your background and have a solid conclusion/end on question

Ex: Classes you are taking, skills you are developing, involvement, internships/co-op/research/part-time work

PRO TIP

Share what you enjoy about the work you have done or are currently doing. If you saw something interesting about the company in your research, you can bring it up if you have time.

Introduction Sample

“Hello, I’m (first name, last name). I am a (class year) student studying _____, and I was excited to see your organization was participating in the (career fair) today. Last summer, I interned/co-oped at _____ where I worked on _____. Through this experience, I developed skills in _____. Outside of this work experience, I am involved in _____ where I serve as (insert role). In my classes, I have been learning more about (relevant topics) and am eager to apply my knowledge and background into (field). I noticed your (open role) on (CareerBuzz) and was interested to learn more about it. Can you please tell me more about (open role) and any others that you think may be a good fit based on my background?”

Making Conversation

Small talk helps you develop a rapport with employers, and it is an essential skill for networking. In the Career Center, we encourage you to engage with employer representatives and recruiters if they ask you questions. While it is great to have a prepared elevator pitch, your conversation should not be so structured that you don’t create a dialogue. Transition to your pitch organically after a greeting and engage using some of the suggested questions or any others that come to mind.



Here are some example questions you may use when framing and continuing your conversations:

- ▷ How are you?
- ▷ How has your week been going so far?
- ▷ What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- ▷ Do you have any advice on what skills or knowledge bases I should be learning now to make myself more competitive in this field?
- ▷ How did you determine this [position/organization] was a good fit for you?
- ▷ Is there anyone else in your network I could connect with to learn more?
- ▷ How has the field changed since you started?

PRO TIP

Pick something from their response to follow up with a more specific question to show that you are engaged and interested in what they have to say.

For more examples of small talk questions, please click [here](#).

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is an opportunity to gather information, spend time with a professional in a career field of interest, and explore and narrow down your options. These interviews may also be useful in a graduate school search. Informational interviews can help you build your network, tap into the job market, and learn unpublished details about a specific company, organization, or school.

Informational interviews can happen with GT Alumni, recruiters, and other working professionals in areas where you aspire to work. You can locate alums or potential contacts online, via LinkedIn, [Mentor Jackets](#), or through other avenues. Once you identify professionals in an industry, career, or organization that interests you, reach out to them to schedule a time to connect. Plan for your discussion to be around 20 minutes.



If this meeting is being held via phone or virtual platform:

- ▷ Be aware of time zone differences, if any, to ensure that you both meet at the correct time.
- ▷ Identify an area that is quiet and private with a strong internet connection to avoid any interruptions.
- ▷ Confirm any other logistics such as meeting links and phone numbers to avoid any confusion.

If this meeting is being held in person:

- ▷ Confirm the correct location. Public places such as quiet cafés or offices are great places to have conversations with very minimal interruptions.
- ▷ Give yourself a little more time than you think you need to get to your location and to prepare for any unexpected delays such as traffic or a missed turn.
- ▷ Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early.

PRO TIP

Follow up with a “thank you” note to your connection for their time and reach out periodically to maintain your relationship.

Managing Your Relationships

How you maintain contact with your connections is dependent on the nature of your relationship.

You may find that after speaking with someone about their career, you may no longer be interested in continuing to explore that profession or company. In this case, it is okay to not continue contacting the connection after sending a thank-you follow-up.

If you both enjoyed your conversation and you are both interested in staying in touch, you may communicate more regularly.

If you have a negative experience, this is okay! The negative experiences could be due to differences in personalities or stress from the day. It is still best to send a thank-you note and move on to other things.

If you took notes or recall some significant information from your informational interview, use this as a segue to follow-up and stay connected.



Examples:

- ▷ If a contact reaches a milestone (promotion, new role, completed project), reach out to them and congratulate them.
- ▷ Connect via LinkedIn (if this was not how you initially met) after your informational interviews with them.
- ▷ Use yearly changes (holidays, beginning/end of the semester/year) as an opportunity to reach out to those you have not heard from in a while, wish them well, and provide them with any life updates that you have.

With this information, you not only know how to connect with people and expand your network, but you will also know how to handle informational interviews in the future when a new professional reaches out to you.



Virtual Identity

Many employers and recruiters utilize social media and networking sites to locate and source candidates. A positive virtual identity is essential for those that are job searching to showcase your online brand. If you believe that any content on your social media and networking profiles does not represent you and your brand favorably, it is encouraged that you review this and make changes where necessary.

Contact Email

Make sure that you have a professional email address with all or a portion of your name in the email username to create a positive first impression. Additionally, choose an interface that avoids spam issues. If needed, you can create a brand-new email to use exclusively for job search purposes.

Voicemail

Ensure that your voicemail box is not full and that your voicemail greeting is professional with little to no background noise in the voicemail message that others receive when you are unavailable to speak.

Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Other Social Media Platforms

These websites have more of a personal focus, however this information (if it not made private) can be used to screen you as a job applicant. Use these with caution and monitor the content that is shared by you and your friends or followers on these sites.



LinkedIn and Other Professional Sites

The purpose for LinkedIn and other similar websites is for professional networking and making connections with working professionals. It is essential to learn how to use these websites and leverage them to effectively expand your networks and make connections with those that interest you. Follow company/organization accounts for insight into their culture, industry trends, services, and more. Additionally, connect with those who work with the company that are in positions you aspire to pursue. Professionally interact with posts from the company or employee to stay in the loop.

Privacy Settings

It is recommended that you check your privacy settings on your social media and networking sites. This is because of ever-changing privacy regulations that may alter the settings you originally placed on your account.

Search Your Name Online

Have you ever wondered what shows online when you search your name? Look it up! Try using other search engines as well to see what employers might find when they search for your name. If there is anything that may be detrimental to your image, investigate having it removed. By using an incognito browser, this will allow you to see what someone with no connection to you might also see.



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ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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