



Professional Networking

Building Authentic Connections for Long-Term Career Success

THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

- **Jobs via Networking:** commonly cited estimates suggest up to 85% of jobs are filled through networking
- **Hidden Job Market:** 70% of jobs are never publicly advertised — filled before they post
- **Referral Advantage:** Referred candidates are 4-5x more likely to be hired than cold applicants

*Sources: Adler (2016) via LinkedIn; Youngquist as cited in NPR (2011); Pinpoint (2025).

Networking IS NOT:

- Asking strangers for jobs
- Collecting business cards
- Transactional manipulation

Networking IS:

- Building genuine relationships
- Exchanging value over time
- Creating community in your field

THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- A 20-30 minute conversation where YOU ask questions to learn about someone's career path, industry insights, and advice — NOT to ask for a job. Aim for 2-3 per month during your job search.
- Where to find people: USI Alumni Mentor Network, LinkedIn, Professional associations, Faculty
- Response rate: Expect 20-30%. Send 10 requests to get 2-3 conversations

Outreach Template

"Hi [Name], I'm a graduate student in [program] at USI exploring careers in [field]. I found your profile inspiring, especially your work at [company/project]. Would you have 20 minutes for a brief call to share your career insights? I'd be grateful for any advice."

Questions To Ask

- "How did you get started in this field?"
- "What skills are most important for success in your role?"
- "What advice would you give someone in my position?"

Your 30-Second Elevator Pitch

1. HOOK	"I help [who] achieve [what result]"
2. CONTEXT	Current role + program at USI
3. VALUE	Key achievement or relevant experience
4. ASK	What you're looking for or exploring

7 Networking Mistakes to Avoid

1. Only networking when you need something
2. Generic connection requests
3. Asking for a job in first message
4. Failing to follow up (thank-you within 24 hours!)
5. Not researching before meeting
6. One-way relationships (give before you get)
7. Hiding behind screens (in-person > video > phone > email)

7-Day Action Plan

- Days 1-2:** Activate USI Alumni Mentor Network in Career Launch. Identify 5-10 target professionals to connect with.
- Days 3-4:** Send 5 personalized LinkedIn connection requests. Use Copilot to research each person before reaching out.
- Days 5-6:** Request 1 informational interview using the template. Register for 1 upcoming professional event or association meeting.
- Day 7:** Create your network tracking spreadsheet and schedule 30 minutes weekly to maintain relationships.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Your network is built one genuine conversation at a time. Activate the USI Alumni Mentor Network in Career Launch and send one personalized connection request this week.

USI Career Success Center

Orr Center, Room 1051 | (812) 464-1865

Schedule an Appointment

usi.edu/career-success | Career Launch