



 PART 5 OF 9

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

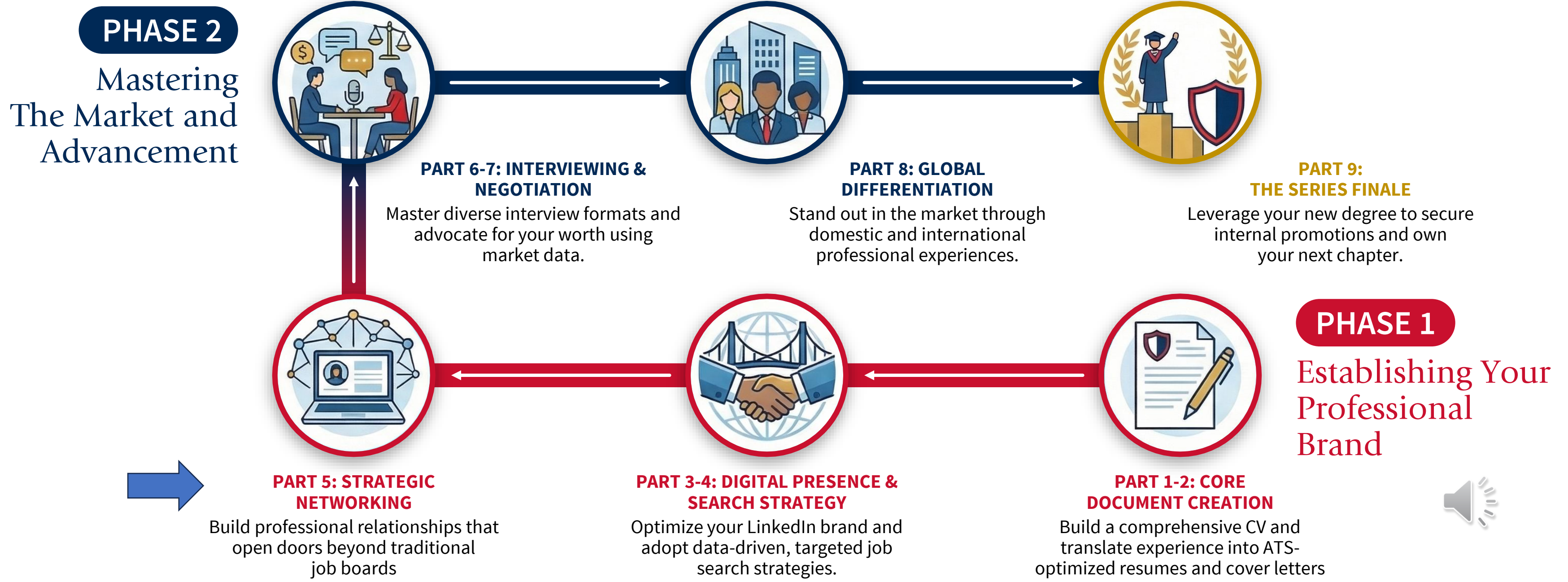
— Building Authentic Connections for Long-Term Career Success —

Presented by USI Career Success Center

 usi.edu/career-success



ROADMAP TO EXCELLENCE: THE USI GRADUATE STUDENT CAREER WEBINAR SERIES



THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

85%

commonly cited estimates suggest up to 85% of jobs are filled through networking

70%

of jobs are never publicly advertised

4-5x

Referred candidates are 4-5x more likely to be hired

54%

of professionals found their current job through connections



Network is not

Asking strangers for jobs, collecting business cards, or being transactional

Network is

Building genuine relationships, offering value first, creating mutual benefit over time



“Your network is your net worth.”

- Porter Gale, former VP of Marketing at Virgin America



BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Inner Circle

Close mentors, advisors, trusted colleagues who actively support your career

5-10 People



Professional Network

Industry peers, former colleagues, classmates you stay in regular contact with

50-150 People



Extend Network

LinkedIn connections, conference contacts, acquaintances in your field

500+ People



USI Resources

- Alumni Mentor Network (Career Launch)
- Professors and faculty advisors
- Guest speakers in your program
- Career fairs and employer events
- USI Mentor Match - usi.edu/alumni/mentor-match

Professional Organization

- SHRM, ACHE, NASW, ASPA chapters
- Industry conferences and events
- Local business organizations
- Volunteer opportunities

Digital Networking

- LinkedIn (strategic connections)
- Industry Slack/Discord communities
- Virtual conferences and webinars
- Professional Twitter/X communities

Quality Over Quantity

100 meaningful connections are more valuable than 1,000 random LinkedIn contacts. Focus on building real relationships.



THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Definition: 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.**

Request Template

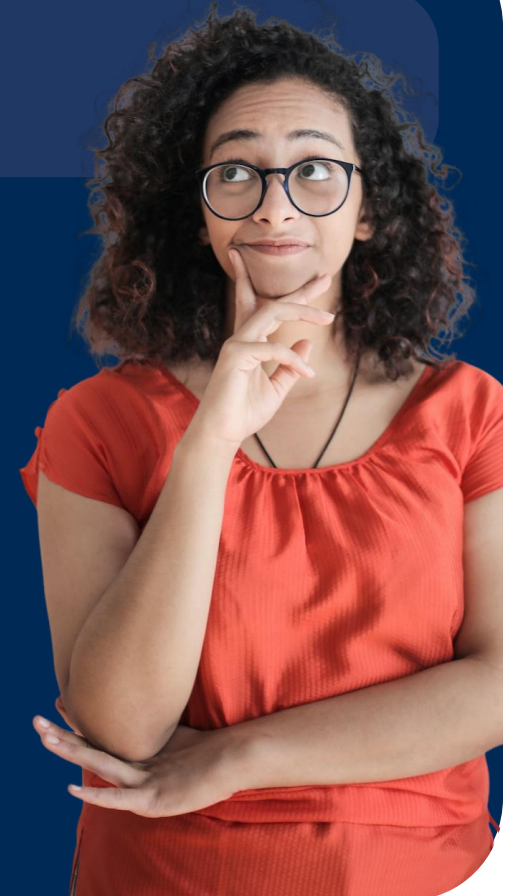
“Hi [Name], I'm a graduate student in [program] at USI exploring careers in [field]. I found your profile inspiring, especially your work at [company/ project]. Would you have 20 minutes for a brief call to share your career insights? I'd be grateful for any advice.”

Success Tips

- ✓ Be specific about why you chose them
- ✓ Keep to your time limit (respect their time)
- ✓ Send a thank you within 24 hours
- ✓ Ask: “Who else should I talk to?”

Questions To Ask

- “How did you get started in this field?”
- “What does a typical day look like in your role?”
- “What skills are most important for success?”
- “What do you wish you knew when starting out?”
- “What challenges is the industry facing?”
- “What professional organizations do you recommend?”
- “What advice would you give someone in my position?”
- “Who else would you suggest I speak with?”



Never Ask For A Job

in an informational interview. The moment you ask, the dynamic changes. Focus on learning — jobs often come naturally from relationships you build.



LINKEDIN NETWORKING STRATEGIES



Personalized Connection Request (300 Char Limit)

“Hi [Name], I'm an MHA student at USI interested in healthcare operations. I noticed your work at [Company] and would love to connect and learn from your career path. Hope to stay in touch!”

Engagement Strategies

- Comment thoughtfully on posts (not just “Great post!”)
- Share industry articles with your perspective
- Congratulate connections on achievements
- React to posts from target companies
- *Aim for 3-5 meaningful interactions daily*

Who To Connect With

- USI alumni in your field (search by school)
- Hiring managers at target companies
- Industry thought leaders
- Recruiters in your field
- Peers in your graduate program

After They Accept

- Send a thank you message within 24 hours
- Reference something specific from their profile
- Offer value: share a relevant article
- Ask one thoughtful question
- *Don't immediately ask for a job or favor*



Copilot Prompt

“Write a personalized LinkedIn connection request for [Name] who works as [Title] at [Company]. I'm interested in [reason]. Keep it under 300 characters.”



Steppingblocks shows you real career outcomes for your major, so you know exactly where to aim. Then use LinkedIn to start connecting with people already working in those roles!

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS & EVENTS



Healthcare (MHA/MSN)

ACHE, MGMA, HFMA, AONE

Student memberships available



Business (MBA)

Local Chamber, Rotary, MBA associations

Industry-specific groups



Social Work/Public Admin

NASW, ASPA, local nonprofit networks

Government leadership programs

Before The Event

- Review attendee/speaker list
- Identify 3-5 people to meet
- Prepare your 30-second intro
- Prepare 2-3 conversation starters
- Bring business cards



During The Event

- Arrive early (less crowded)
- Approach people standing alone
- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen more than you talk
- Take notes on your phone



After The Event

- Connect on LinkedIn within 24 hrs
- Reference specific conversation
- Send follow-up email if promised
- Add contacts to your tracker
- Schedule next touchpoint



30-SECOND INTRO: “Hi, I’m [Name], an MHA student at USI focusing on [specialty]. I’m currently working on [project/practicum] and I’m interested in [area]. What brings you here today?”



MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

The Fortune Is In The Follow-up

80% of networking value comes from nurturing relationships over time, not the initial meeting.

Staying In Touch

- Share relevant articles they'd find useful
- Congratulate on promotions/achievements
- Comment on their LinkedIn posts
- Send holiday or birthday greetings
- Introduce them to others in your network

Touch base every 2-3 months minimum

Value You Can Over

- Industry news or research they missed
- Introductions to your connections
- Skills/perspective from your program
- Event or webinar recommendations
- Genuine appreciation and support

Give before you ask

Tracking Your Network

- Create a simple spreadsheet:
- Name, Company, How you met
- Last contact date
- Key details (interests, family, etc.)
- Next follow-up date

Set calendar reminders

The Fortune Is In The Follow-up

“Hi [Name], I saw [article/news about their company/industry] and thought of you. Hope things are going well at [Company]. I wanted to share that [brief update about you]. Would love to catch up sometime!”



RESOURCES & YOUR ACTION PLAN



USI CAREER SUCCESS CENTER



Orr Center, Room 1051



(812) 464-1865



Alumni Mentor Network via Career Launch

Networking Events

- USI Career Fairs (Fall & Spring)
- Graduate networking mixers
- Employer information sessions

Local Organizations

- Southwest Indiana Chamber
- Young Professionals Network
- Field-specific associations

Your 7-Day Action Plan

Day **1-2**

Activate USI Alumni Mentor Network in Career Launch

Day **3-4**

Send 5 personalized LinkedIn connection requests

Day **5-6**

Request 1 informational interview using template

Day **7**

Create your network tracking spreadsheet

Coming Up Next:

PART 6

INTERVIEW MASTERY

AI-Powered Preparation for Behavioral & Technical Interviews



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA[®]



**CAREER
LAUNCH**

NEED CAREER SUPPORT??

- ▶ You can visit us in the Career Success Center (located in the Orr Center) or book an appointment on Career Launch!
- ▶ Questions? Email us at career.center@usi.edu or give us a call to schedule an appointment (812) 464-1865!

