



Developing Your Professional Network -- Tip Sheet -- NP

There are four reasons you should develop your professional network. They are to 1) help you work smarter, 2) explore your career choices, 3) secure jobs, or 4) advance in your career.

OVERALL BEST PRACTICES

Developing your network will enable you to:

- **Create long-term relationships** with people in your sector of interest, not just get a job. This is especially critical in the nonprofit sector since many organizations don't post positions broadly—if at all. So, if you are thoughtful about developing your network, each step can bring you closer to your next job AND make future steps easier.
- **Obtain referrals.** If you are strategic about your outreach and how you approach people, you are more likely to find people who will connect you further into the organization or sector.

DO I HAVE A NETWORK? WHO'S IN IT? WHO SHOULD I ADD?

- Do this [Mapping Your Developmental Network](#) exercise.
- Think about your approach. Read [How to Maintain Your Network Over the Years](#) to help you structure your thoughts.
- Learn more about Developing Your Network here: <https://cso.gse.harvard.edu/developing-your-career-network>

HOW DO I GET STARTED DEVELOPING MY NETWORK?

Informational interviews, also called **informational meetings**, are a great way to develop your network. These are 20- to 30-minute meetings in which you strategically connect with someone. Based on your reason for networking, you will have a different approach and questions.

Here are some general tips for preparing for informational interviews:

- Learn what you can about the org by reviewing their website and any articles they may have posted on LinkedIn
- Develop a professional introduction based on what you are trying to get out of the interview (4 reasons above)
- Prepare questions for informational interviews. Here are some additional [tips](#).

HOW TO FIND PEOPLE TO ADD TO MY NETWORK?

- **Hub** allows you to connect with students and employers at HGSE.
 - Select Community → Members → filter and search
- **The Harvard Alumni Association** online directory for alumni and students to connect and share professional experience and expertise.
- **LinkedIn** allows you to connect with professionals. To connect to HGSE alumni, go to the *School* page and click on *Alumni*.
 - Join groups, connect with people
- **Get out there!**
 - Attend seminars, panels, conferences, and other events where there will be people drawn to a topic or sector of interest to you.
- **Tap your existing network**
 - Talk to advisors, professors, administrators, fellow students, bosses, supervisors

NB: Keep track of who you reached out to and when, what conversations you had, and who they introduced you to—information that will be helpful and possibly critical later on. Find job trackers on our website at <https://cso.gse.harvard.edu/engage-employers> and choose your pathway (if your pathway doesn't have a tracker, you can use any of the existing ones and amend it to fit your needs—or ask us for input).