



# **Making Professional Contacts**

*Avoid the Schmooze with these  
Don'ts and Dos*

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# Networking Is "Talking to People"



"Mr Longman, which do you think would help me more in my career - a course on accountancy or some golf lessons?"

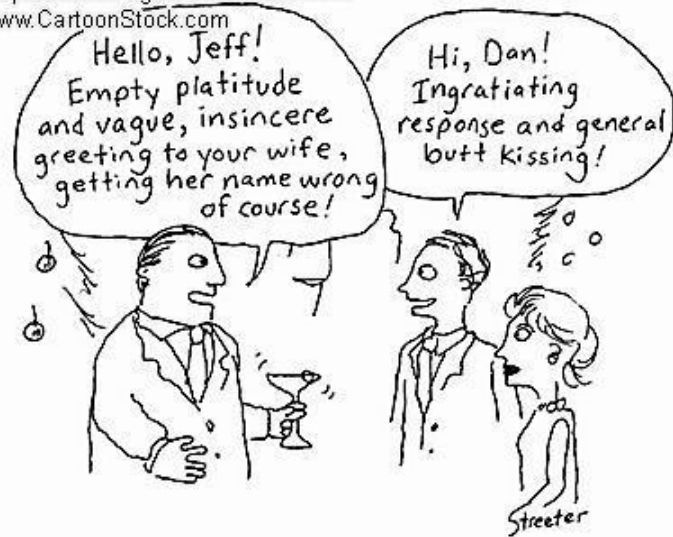
- Making contacts to gain AIR
  - Advice, Information, Referrals
  - Everyone needs AIR and it's free!
  - Helps take the pressure off
- A Professional Practice that continues even after you have a job
- Useful for:
  - Job hunting
  - Choosing a career path
  - Gathering information
  - Getting to know other professionals
  - Seeking and holding leadership positions
  - Getting clients
  - Making a career change

# Finding Jobs through your Contacts

- Nationally over 25% of law jobs are found through networking
- Discover those “unposted” jobs
  - Employers who have never hired before
  - Employers that don’t usually hire law students
  - Employers too busy to hire
  - Job hasn’t been posted yet
  - Employer hires by word-of-mouth
- Employer does hire formally, but networking can get you noticed, or help you interview better
- Doesn’t lead directly to job, but helps with developing interests, leads, insights
- Example: The manicure

# Networking Isn't

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Company Holiday Party

- Schmoozing
  - Schmoozing is fake—be sincere
- “Using” someone
  - Just asking for advice usually flattering
  - You will someday reciprocate
- A One-way street
  - Follow up with an article
  - Offer to help with something
- A One-time shot
  - Keep in touch—the more you make contact, the better they know you and will help
  - Think of a “net” not a line!

# Forms of Networking

- Informational Interview
  - You initiate, choose the target
  - Can research, prepare
- Social/Professional Events
  - You choose to attend, don't know exactly who will be there
  - Limited research, have open mind
- Chance Meetings
  - No warning at all, may not even be a lawyer.
  - PREP really helps here!

# Informational Interview: What it is

- Unlike Formal Interview, YOU control it!
- Target may not be a good networker, be ready to ask for specific forms of help:
  - Advice
  - Information
  - Referrals
- Have an agenda e.g. “To learn more about being a DA”, or “To get advice about breaking into entertainment law”, or “To get help targeting employers in Chicago.”

# Informational Interview: The Setup



- Finding a Contact:
  - Contact Mentor
  - Seek out Alumni in city/practice area ([www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com), CSO, Alumni Office)
  - Join/contact Bar Association or Professional Trade Association
  - Get referral from other contact
- Making Contact
  - Letter & Resume
  - Email (attach resume)
  - Phone (be sensitive of time)
  - Have another contact set up

# Informational Interview: What to Expect

- Prep as though for Formal—expect some of the same questions
  - The better your contact gets to know you, the better AIR you will receive
  - Your sales pitch could be passed on to a key person
- Prepare specific questions related to your agenda
- Allow time for conversation, bonding
  - Contact is more likely to help you if you hit it off
  - You will probably contact them again



# Informational Interview: Details (1)

- Where:
  - Usually at your contact's office, or other convenient place (e.g. breakfast, coffee, lunch, etc.)
  - If mentor, they may invite you to their house
- When:
  - At a mutually convenient time
  - Be clear about length – don't drain time

# Informational Interview: Details (2)

- Dress: Formal Suit is safe, you may ask in advance if you wish
- Logistics
  - 99 out of 100 times, they will pay for coffee/lunch, but bring money just in case
  - Bring resume
  - Gifts not necessary
  - Business cards are optional but available

# Informational Interview: Follow Up



- Thank you note/letter
  - Formal business letter
  - Mention specific conversation

# Social Meeting: Finding One

- Many Alumni/Bar Association Events advertised in Law School
- Join Bar Association
- Check Legal Newspapers for CLEs
- Ask Mentor/Contacts to inform you or take you with
- Ask faculty

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"I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO THESE PEOPLE AS SOON AS SOMEBODY TELLS ME WHO THEY ARE."

# Social Meeting: Tip

- Ask organizers if you can volunteer to help with event
  - Gives you an excuse to talk to people
  - Gets you in free if there's a charge
  - The organizers will get to know you and are good contacts themselves
  - You will get more information about the subject than if you just attended

# Social Meeting: Interaction

- Use your PREP, esp. “Tell me about yourself”
- Have a loose agenda or goal
  - Meet 3 tax attorneys
  - Find out what tax attorneys do
  - Get an idea of what to do this summer
- “Non Legal” Talk is OK—establish rapport and follow up with informational interview or referral
- Don’t talk about yourself the whole time—ask about other person
- Be free with compliments without being insincere
  - People like to talk about themselves. They will think you’re brilliant if you ask about their lives/practices.
- Bring or collect business cards

# Social Meeting: Good Source of Info

- *How to Work a Room* by Susan Roane
- Especially if you're shy
- Especially if you need tips on small talk
- Attend Etiquette Training for Table manners, cocktail party tips, etc.



Psst Geoff,  
you've got a piece of food stuck between your teeth...



# “Chance” Meeting

- Anywhere, anyone!
- Airplane, supermarket, barbershop, waiting in line anywhere, weddings, concerts, class, student groups, etc.
- PREP helps you capitalize on unplanned opportunities.

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"Hi, I'm Joe Smith, but my friends call me, Simbal Lord of the Jungle!"



# “Chance” Meeting in Action

- What do you do if the CEO of a lugnut company starts talking to you on a plane?
  - Tell her you’re a law student
  - Tell her what you like about it
  - Ask about her career
  - Ask about whether there are lawyers in her company (general counsel)
  - Ask which firm they use for legal work
  - Tell her you like her earrings—you’d love to find a pair like that for your mother!
- **Exercise: What else do you do?**

# Questions?



# Follow-up



- Why?
  - Your goal is to build relationships.
  - Repeated professional communication will strengthen your contacts' impression of you and willingness to help you
  - You will be peers soon! Get to know lawyers now.

# Continuing Contact

- How to Keep in Touch

- Periodic Updates—they will be curious and appreciate it!
- More questions will arise—ask!
- Ask for advice on current new situation
- Do something in return—send article on subject you discussed, pass on name of your trusted mechanic (after discussing car woes), etc.

# Where to Get More Information

- Seek help from CSO:
  - Finding contacts
  - Practicing interviews
  - Working out unusual situations
- Check out Resource Page at [www.law.buffalo.edu/cso](http://www.law.buffalo.edu/cso)