NETWORKING TIP GUIDE

What is Networking? Demonstrating Your Value Effectively.

Networking through a variety of platforms is increasingly important to find, strengthen, and cultivate connections that may aid you both professionally and personally.

Networking consists of building relationships with others, advancing your knowledge, growing your professional and personal network, and is at its best, beneficial for both parties.

Whether in-person, or digitally on LinkedIn, One Network, or other platforms, networking creates an opportunity to connect, build a long-lasting network, and seek or plan for new opportunities.

Networking Etiquette Tips

To create a lasting impression and effectively build your network, adhering to proper etiquette is essential. Here are some tips to ensure you demonstrate your value effectively:

Tip 1: Optimize Your Profile: Ensure your profile is complete, up-to-date, and professional on digital platforms. Use a high-quality photo and craft a compelling headline and summary showcasing your skills, achievements, and career goals.

Tip 2: Personalize Your Communication: Avoid generic phrases like "I'm interested" in post comments and messages. Craft brief, personalized messages to express specific interest. Keep public comments concise; save details for direct messages or cover letters. Always customize connection requests with a personal reason, like a shared event, W&M background, or common connection. If you don't get a response within 1-2 weeks, sending a follow-up is acceptable. However, avoid persistently pursuing if there's still no response.

Tip 3: Clarify Your Needs: When seeking assistance or advice, be explicit about your request, but **refrain from directly asking for a job.** Specify the type of role, desired industry, or specific information you are looking for (i.e., a conversation about their organization or career path). This clarity helps your network understand your request and increases the chances of receiving relevant assistance.

Tip 4: Research Before Connecting: Before sending a connection request or a direct message take the time to research the person you wish to connect with. Mention common interests or projects to show you've put thought into the connection request.

Tip 5: Express Gratitude: Make sure to thank anyone who responds to your requests and follow up with them to let them know how their assistance has helped you (for example, if you secured an interview or spoke with a referred connection). After attending an event, send personalized thank you messages to the host, speakers, and others you met to show appreciation. This small gesture leaves a positive impression.

Tip 6: Consider Your Audience: When sharing on social media or networking platforms, consider your audience's potential benefit. If your contribution has broader relevance, share it on a newsfeed. If the discussion veers toward individual matters, it may be better to direct message. For personal or one-on-one matters, use direct messages or emails.

Tip 7: Share & Engage with Relevant Content: Share articles, insights and updates related to your field to demonstrate your knowledge and passion. Engage with others' content through thoughtful comments and "@mentions" to add value and invite others to the conversation.

Tip 8: Maintain Professional Communication: Uphold a courteous and professional demeanor in all your communications. Find common ground, which may include various aspects of your experience at W&M, industry experience, or passion projects. Steer clear of contentious or offensive subjects, and meticulously review your messages for any typos or grammatical mistakes.

Tip 9: Engage in Groups and Communities: Participate in LinkedIn groups and One Network communities relevant to your industry or interests. You may also join an alumni regional network upon graduation to establish a W&M network in a city close to your post-graduation location. Contribute to discussions, share insights, and connect with like-minded professionals.

Tip 10: Build Authentic Relationships: Prioritize quality over quantity when building your network. Nurture relationships with individuals you can assist and those who can help your professional growth. Relationships take time to build. Focus on the person and not on what you believe they can do for you.

Tip 11: Practice Patience: Building a strong network takes time; instant results are not guaranteed. Consistency and patience are key to achieving success.

Tip 12: Develop a Strong Elevator Pitch: Create and practice a 20-second self-introduction that encapsulates your personal brand. Whether in virtual, social, or job-related settings, this pitch serves as an effective introduction, especially in networking events, making it one of the first things you share right after introducing yourself.

Tip 13: Follow-Up: Make sure to follow-up with individuals you have connected with from time to time. Touchpoints along the way may include job search updates, major projects you have completed, check-in conversations, sharing relevant industry news, and more!

Sample Outreach

Sample LinkedIn outreach message through a group or direct message:
Mr./Ms. _____, (or first name if appropriate)
I am a first-year student at William & Mary exploring career options, including those in computer science. I found your background in video gaming very interesting and was hoping to learn more about your career path and get advice from a professional in the field. Would it be possible to schedule a brief meeting over the next few weeks via phone or video to talk about advice you have for someone looking to break into the field? I am generally available on Tuesday and Thursdays after 3PM but can be flexible to your schedule. Thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you!

Sample LinkedIn outreach message: (200-character limit):
Hello, I am a senior econ major at W&M pursuing a career in finance. I found your profile and would love to learn more about your experiences. Would you be open to having a quick virtual chat?