

ECRC Guide to Networking

Tips and Strategies for Making Confident and Successful Connections



MICHIGAN ENGINEERING
ENGINEERING CAREER RESOURCE CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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LET'S REFRAME NETWORKING

Networking = making meaningful connections and building relationships

Common misconceptions of networking in American society

- Selling and promoting yourself in a highly stimulating environment
- Being naturally outgoing & high energy
- A crowded room of professionals exchanging business cards
- Connecting with as many people as possible in order to get job leads

While "networking" can be an intimidating term, it is just talking to people - something that you do **everyday**

Networking is about telling your story, listening to others, and building relationships

- Telling your story and listening to other's stories
- Researching new organizations
- Connecting your purpose to other's experiences
- Giving back to others. Networking is about two-way conversations.
- Focusing on on-one-one quality connections. It's about individual conversations.

It's about the value you can **SHOW** others, how can you connect to their mission and the problems they are facing

WHY Network ?

- Networking benefits you in the present and the future, it's an evolving life skill
- Networking is about giving and receiving insight and advice about anything, not just about jobs
- By stepping out of your comfort zone, you grow personally and professionally
- Networking relationships can provide you inside information about organizations
- Having focused conversations can be beneficial and complementary to online job applications
- Networking has been a meaningful way that our graduating students have found their first full-time job



THE NETWORKING MINDSET

It's about telling your STORY

Clarity in your knowledge, skills, and abilities

Confidence in who you are and how you present yourself

Connection to the story of others and the value you can offer

What is the Introduction to Your Story?

(This is also known as your "elevator pitch" and answer to the question "tell me about yourself")

Think about what others would say about your strengths or ask them! You may write out key aspects of your story but practice it naturally instead of memorizing it. As you prepare your introduction, reflect upon this question: What problems have you solved, and for whom?

Present: Talk briefly about your experience as a student or your current role and perhaps a big recent accomplishment.

Past: Tell the employer how you got there and/or mention previous experience that's relevant to the job and company you're applying for.

Future: Segue into what you're looking to do next and why you're interested in this company.



Examples of Elevator Pitches

Targeting internship in water research (to be used at a Career Fair)

Hello, my name is Michael Thomas. I'm a junior studying environmental engineering seeking an internship position in water research. For the past two years, I've worked on a project with BLUElab aimed at monitoring water quality in the Great Lakes and proposing various water purification methods. This semester, I'm also conducting research on campus where I am overseeing tests for a wastewater treatment project. I think my experience in water quality and developing effective test procedures would make me a good fit for an internship with your company. Would you be able to tell me more about your internship program?

Targeting internship in electrical engineering (to be used at a networking event)

Hello, my name is Ella Chan. I'm a sophomore studying electrical engineering at the University of Michigan. As a University of Michigan alumnus, was there anything that you were involved in when you were a student that you found prepared you well for your career opportunities?

WHAT IS YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH?

**What do others say about your strengths
and how do they describe you?**



Write down your OWN elevator pitch

Start with three experiences that connect you to
your audience (education, activities, etc.)

STORYTELLING

STAR Framework



Use the STAR technique to tell compelling and complete stories about your experiences. Reflect upon memorable experiences and accomplishments.

Situation: Clearly define the context.

Task: Explain the specific task you were asked to accomplish.

Action: Describe the steps you took to address the task.

Result: Tell them how the story ends. How did things turn out?

Tell & Show - What is Your Evidence ?

Remember storytelling is about connecting your value to others and what better way to do that than to show or demonstrate value across multiple platforms and engagements.

- Create an online Portfolio/Blog/Github account
- Upload projects on LinkedIn in feature section
- Show abilities through meaningful volunteer activities

Ask Good Questions

Storytelling isn't just about sharing knowledge, it's about asking good questions that extend the conversation.



PROJECTING CONFIDENCE

LEAVE A MEMORABLE FIRST IMPRESSION

Conveying confidence is as important as learning networking skills. Self-confidence is projected in the way you interact with others and can make a lasting first impression.

And it starts with believing in yourself.

- Eye contact:** This is essential - practice looking people directly in the eye.
- Smile:** This is the number one way you can show interest in others.
- Posture:** How you carry yourself, sitting up straight and leaning-in shows a sign of interest in the speaker.
- Match & Mirror:** Observe the behavior of the individual with whom you are speaking, and do your best to act in a complementary manner. The tone of one's voice can alter the dynamic of the interaction. Elevating, enunciating, and emphasizing words can make a difference. Try to match the tone of the speaker for a more comfortable conversation.

Also listen to the way they speak. If they are using plain, non-technical, speech then avoid unnecessary jargon.

Matching and mirroring will allow that person to be at ease, which in turn will allow you to relax.

"Confidence is much more about connecting with **who you really are** than behaving in any particular way!"
- Rebecca Haydon, *The Confidence Coach*



OPPORTUNITIES & TIPS FOR CONNECTING

Michigan Engineering provides many personalized opportunities for you to meet professionals looking to connect with Michigan engineers for future job roles. Take advantage of these opportunities to learn and practice networking. In-person and virtual networking can be daunting, but the more you practice, the more comfortable you will become!

Opportunities for Campus Networking

- Career Fairs
- Career Days
- Info Sessions
- Tech Talks
- Student Orgs
- Conferences



Tips from Peers

"You're the best expert there is on you, so make the most of the opportunity to show why you're a good fit."

"Networking is a skill. Like the skills you develop in your coursework, as you practice exercising your skills, the stronger they become."

"Your experiences are unique to you. So be confident in and own the experiences that you have."

Small-Talk Tips

Small talk is light, informal conversation. It's commonly used when you're talking to someone you don't know very well and at networking and social events. While small talk can feel awkward, it helps to get the conversation started and keep it going.

- **Share the spotlight.** While you want to be interesting, you also want to be interested in what others are saying. It's okay to let the other person do the talking sometimes by asking good questions.
- **Deepen the conversation** by asking open ended questions to encourage the other person to tell their story.
- **Find common interests** and follow-up on bits of information by practicing active listening. Ask "What else?" "Can you tell me more about that?"
- **Prepare for topics** that are likely to come up during small talk. These may include, the weather, news/current events, your experience at the university, sports, your hometown, etc. Do not bring up sensitive topics such as religion or politics.
- **Ask for their contact information** before you end the conversation if you want to stay in touch.
- **Show interest and be personable** – smile, engage, and make good eye contact.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

This is one of the best strategies for networking, as it focuses on one-on-one conversations with a professional purpose.

A career-oriented conversation with a professional where you gather **information and advice** about a particular field or company you are interested in and gain insights about the job search.

An informational interview IS:

- A chance to learn about a field from an insider's perspective
- A way to enhance the career research you're already doing
- A way to build contacts in your field that could lead to a job
- A way to make a great first impression

An informational interview IS NOT:

- A job interview
- A chance to ask for favors
- A casual, unguided discussion
- A time to ask "So what do you/your company do."

Make a Great First Impression

Preparing for the interview

- Identify contacts
 - Start with people you know and then expand to alumni you don't know
 - Connect with an ECRC advisor to learn more
- Research your interviewees' online presence
 - LinkedIn profile, company website, etc.
- Bring your resume and other evidence of your work
 - Consider sending it via email ahead of your conversation
- Develop your "story intro"
 - AKA your elevator pitch
- Prepare great questions
 - Bring a list of intentional & specific questions beyond what you can google
 - View the end of the guide to learn the TIARA method for questioning

Conducting the interview

- Dress professionally
 - In most cases, business casual attire is fine
- Allow the conversation to flow naturally
 - Focus on listening, not asking all your questions
- Follow-up with gratitude
 - Express your appreciation for their time by sending a thank you note reiterating at least one specific thing you took away from the interview
- Maintain your connection
 - Keep connected over time and show your interest

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

Steve Dalton's Informational Interview TIARA Framework

Steve Dalton's book, *The 2-Hour Job Search*, provides a prescriptive approach for identifying future potential employers and networking your way to new opportunities. TIARA is an acronym for the 5 topics that can be covered during the Q&A phase of the informational interview

1. **Trends:** What trends are impacting your business right now?
 2. **Insights:** Has anything surprised you in your role so far?
 3. **Advice:** What can I be doing right now to prepare myself for a career in this field?
 4. **Resources:** What resources do you recommend I look into next?
 5. **Assignments:** What projects are most important to your work?
- Lastly: The last question you should ask in every meeting is, *"Who else do you recommend I talk with?"*

Questions to Ask

- Tell me about your career story?
- Where did you start your career?
- What surprised you most about your current job?
- What is your favorite or least favorite part about your job?
- What's the most exciting thing about your team?"
- What are you working on these days?" or what are you most excited about right now and why?
- "As an expert in [field], I'd love to hear your thoughts on [event, announcement, major change].
- Who is someone in the field that you admire or has had an impact on your career?
- What is the best advice you received in your career?
- What are the trends in this field, and where do you think this industry is headed?
- What advice do you have for me in the job/internship search?
- *Who else would you recommend I contact to learn more about this field?*

The Five Point Email

When you are trying to connect with someone new for the first time, we recommend following these 5 tips for tips for crafting an effective outreach message:

1. 100 words or less
2. The connection goes first
3. Generalize your interest
4. Do not mention jobs
5. Maintain control of follow-up

Subject: U of M Engineering Student Seeking Your Advice
Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is Anne Arbore, and I'm a second-year computer science student who found your information from LinkedIn. I'm trying to learn more about software development careers and your insights would be very helpful. May I have 15 minutes of your time to ask you about your experience with IBM? I realize this may be a busy time for you, so if we're unable to connect at this time, I'll try again next week to see whether that is more convenient.

Thank you for your time,
Anne Arbore

ONLINE NETWORKING LINKEDIN

Elevate Your Presence and Share Your Career Story Online

LinkedIn is a knowledge resource sharing center and networking platform that allows you to:

- Connect to professionals and University of Michigan alumni
- Identify target companies and contacts and learn more about your field of interest

Top 5 Reasons Why You Should Use LinkedIn

1. Over 70% of employers use LinkedIn to screen candidates
2. You can discover many opportunities beyond the career fair and online job postings
3. Employers will google search you and LinkedIn will show up at the top of that search
4. LinkedIn gives you inside knowledge about the company and what is trending
5. LinkedIn is a great place to connect directly to University of Michigan alumni

Develop Your Profile

- Upload a professional headshot and create a unique headline about what you are seeking
- Include key words related to your field of interest throughout your profile
- Make an appointment with an ECRC advisor to review your profile
- Read more about LinkedIn profile tips in the student [Career Guide](#)

Build Your Network

- Identify contacts – through key word searches, company pages, people filter, and the LinkedIn Alumni tool for UM
- Join relevant groups, including [UM Engineering Alumni](#)
- Always send a customized connection request on LinkedIn
- Comment, like and start discussions with other professionals

**LinkedIn is "Future- Oriented"
so show others your future
interests and goals**

**The power of LinkedIn is
connecting to NEW people that
you don't already know**

**Always follow-up an in-person
connection with a digital one**

CONFERENCE NETWORKING

Strike Up A Conversation

You're in an environment with people who share your passion for technology and promoting opportunities for women in the field. You already have much in common with those around you. The risk is low. The connection is strong.

What questions might you ask to start a conversation?

- What did you think about the keynote address?
- How are you enjoying the conference?

Objective

Meet new people, uncover shared interests and explore opportunities for future collaboration and engagement.

Keep it Going

What do you talk about?

- Your Conference Experience, Events, Exhibits, etc.
- Your Work
- Your School
- Your Interests and Aspirations

Identify Common Interests

- Hold leadership roles in your schools' chapters of Women in Computer Science
- Conducting research in machine learning and artificial intelligence

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Agree that you would like to meet up to continue the conversation

- Exchange email addresses so that you can connect when you return to school
- Invite them to connect in LinkedIn



GRACE HOPPER

Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing is the world's largest gathering of technologists, bringing the research and career interests of women in computing to the forefront.

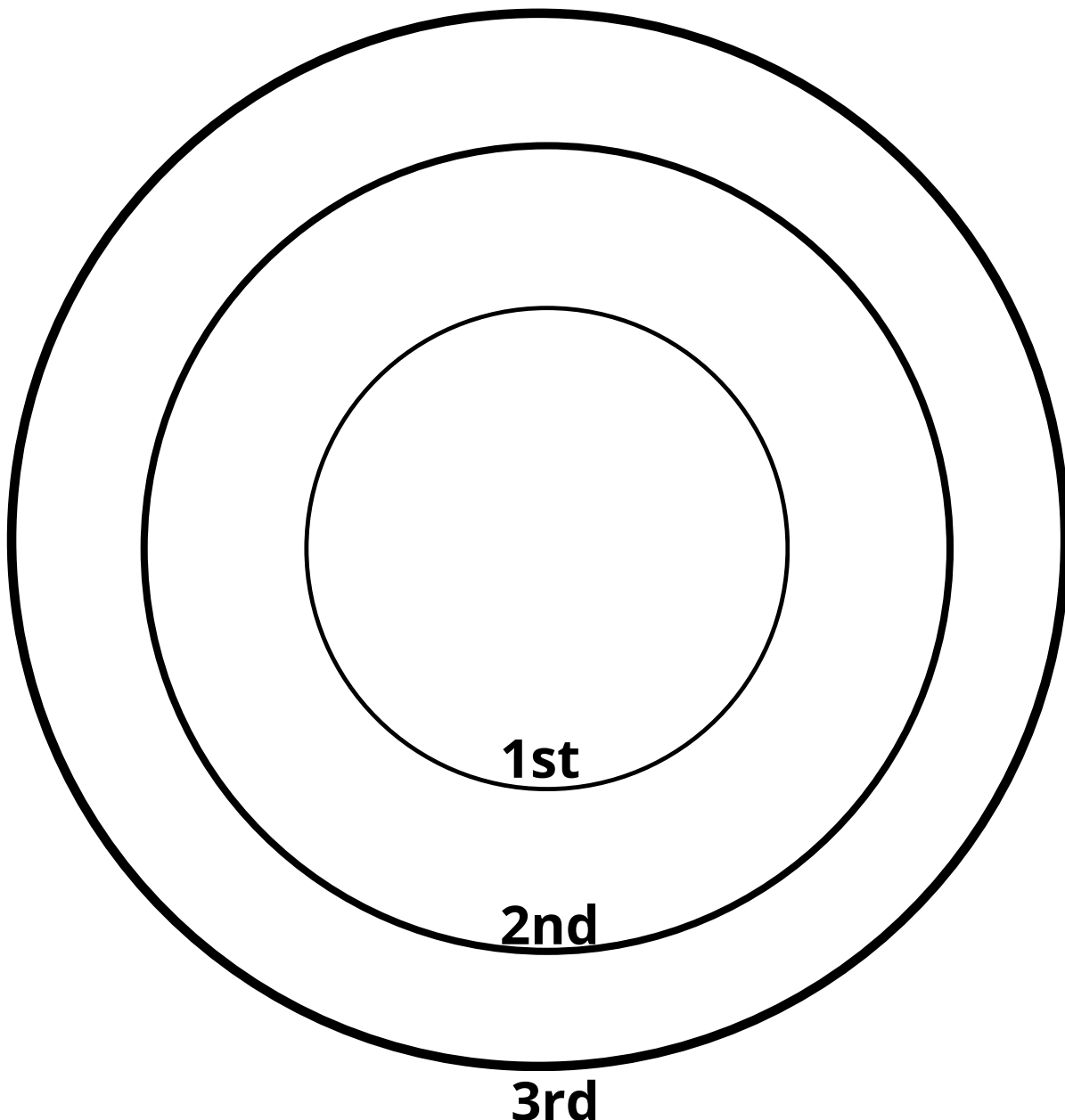
NETWORKING CIRCLES: BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY

This activity will help you analyze and identify networking contacts.

1. In the 1st circle write down the names of people that you know very well.
2. In the 2nd circle write down names of people or organizations that you have had some contact with in your life but are not as close.
3. In the 3rd circle, brainstorm people & places you want to know - your target.

Ask yourself

How can people in the 1st and 2nd circles help you make connections to the 3rd circle?



YOUR ACTION STEP PLAN

After reading through the guide, what are your top five action steps you will take to move forward as a confident networker!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Career Days
Information Sessions
Networking Days
Tech Talks
Employer Workshops
Student Organization Meetings



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- **Share the spotlight.** While you want to be interesting, you also wanted to be interested in what others are saying. It's okay to let the other person do the talking sometimes by asking good questions. See the next page for question ideas.
- **Deepen the conversation** and ask open ended questions to encourage the other person to tell their story.
- **Find common interests, and follow-up on bits of information** by practicing active listening. Ask "What else?" "Tell me more about that?"
- **Prepare for topics that are likely to come up during small talk.** These may include, the weather, news/current events, your experience at the university, sports, your hometown, etc. Do not bring up sensitive topics such as religion or politics.
- **Ask for their contact information** before you leave the conversation if you want to stay in touch.
- **Show interest and be personable** – smile, engage, and make good eye contact.

METHODS FOR CONNECTING

Ways to connect

- Weakest Connection — Email
- Good Connection — Phone Call
- Strongest Connection — Video Call or In-Person Meeting (when possible)

Google Check Yourself

- Remember to "google" check yourself by searching through content, images, and setting up a "google alert" for your name.
- Visit *brandyourself.com* to get an understanding of your digital reputation

Be intentional & strategic:

- **Don't just go through the motions.** Have a specific purpose behind connecting.
- **Focus on the long game.** You are developing a relationship, it's not just about one interaction.
- **Ask yourself what information** would you most like to know from professionals in your field.
- **Consider remote & long-distance connections:** Phone or video meetings can allow you to connect to professionals in your target cities.
- **Create a monthly goal** for yourself as you plan informational interviews.
- **Keep organized** by developing a tracking document of your conversations through excel, google docs/calendar, airtable or other software.



DEFINING & UNDERSTANDING INTROVERSION

Introversion is:

- A personality preference or temperament
- Having an inwards vs an outward orientation to life
- Individuals who may prefer quieter, more low-key environment
- Gaining energy by reflecting and expending energy while interacting

Introversion is not:

- Being “shy” or having social anxiety even though it is often defined as this in our culture
- When one dislikes all socializing and interaction with other people
- Describing individuals who lack passion or interest in everyday life

How do I know if I'm an introvert?

Introverts make up a significant portion of the world's population. Introversion and extroversion are on a spectrum - we all have some of each preference but tend to lean one way or the other.

If you want to find where you fall on the spectrum, take this brief online quiz for potential insight:

<https://www.quietrev.com/the-introvert-test/>

*Note: You can take this quick quiz without providing any identifying information by selecting "No thank you , I'll just take the test" at the bottom of the page

Own your introversion

Being an introvert is who you are and introverts bring many strengths to the workplace.

What is your Introvert Superpower?

Highly focused & deep thinkers

Idea generators & quiet strategists

Thoughtful observers

*Empathetic listeners
& questioners*

*Compassionate
leaders*

Self-sufficient & self-reliant

Thorough decision makers

My introvert superpower is

INTROVERT CAREER FAIR TIPS

Schedule a career advising appointment, a group peer chat, or attend a career fair prep workshop before the career fair. Talk with another student who has attended the fair in the past to get their perspective.

Practice small-talk conversations with a friend before attending the fair.

Observe and become comfortable with the space before talking to employers. As a first-year student, attend the event to increase your comfort level for future semesters.

Remember your "peer network", the support of your fellow students attending the fair. Connect and learn from one another. Peers may become long term contacts or have new advice for you.

Shine with your follow-up. After the fair send an email to emphasize your interests and remind them of your conversation and what you have to offer.

Remember at the end of the day, reflect about your small successes - even one conversation can make a difference. There are other ways to talk with employers beyond career fairs.

Peer advice for introverts attending the career fair

"Remember the other students attending along side of you. Support one another!"

"Go it alone. refrain from being with friends during career fairs. It's your career and there's no reason to not face it alone."

"The recruiters on the other side of the table are fellow human beings...get to know them."

"Keep a few back-up scenarios in your mind when interacting with recruiters at a career fair"

"You only have to gather the courage to engage in a short 3-5 minute conversation with a recruiter at career fair. That's only a couple minutes that could potentially lead you to your dream job"

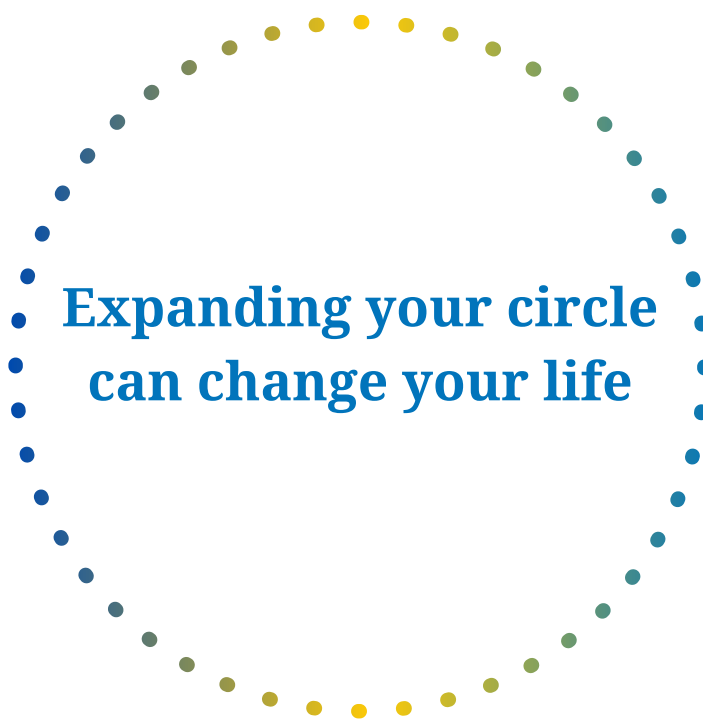
ADVICE FROM YOUR PEERS ABOUT NETWORKING

"You're the best expert there is on you, so make the most of the opportunity to show why you're a good fit"

"Networking is a skill. Like the skills you develop in your coursework, as you practice exercising your skills, the stronger they become. Take it from a fellow introvert."

"Your experiences are unique to you. So be confident in and own the experiences that you have"

"While 'networking' can be an intimidating term, it is just talking to people - something that you do everyday."



**Expanding your circle
can change your life**

"Ask questions- Asking questions in conversations allows the other person to talk while you can gather your thoughts and calm yourself if need be."

Allow the conversation to be open ended at times- Putting in phrases like 'What are your thoughts on it?' or 'How do you feel about it?'

"Don't use your identity as an introvert as a crutch and defend your actions of staying away from people. You're an introvert because your energy comes from within."

"Introverts do not hate small talk because we dislike people. We dislike small talk because we hate the barrier it creates between people."

- Dr. Laurie Helgoe, Introvert Power