

Networking

Tips for Developing and Cultivating Professional Contacts

Step One: Identify Your Targets

What do you want to be? Who does this work? Where are they?

Step Two: Meet People

Go to an event. Talk to people and request their business cards.

- Networking Events • Pro Bono Activities • Alumni Events
- Bar events (WSBA – www.wsba.org, King County Bar Association – www.kcba.org, Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association – www.tpcba.com/)
- Continuing Legal Education Conferences and Seminars

Step Three: Follow Up

Within 2 days of meeting someone, send them a short email. Reference the conversation you had or mention hearing them speak at an event, and ask them for an informational interview. You want thirty minutes over coffee, at the time and place of their convenience, to ask about their practice, their career path, and any advice they may have. **Remember your elevator speech!** At the end of that coffee meeting, ask for the name of a few of their colleagues who may be willing to give you thirty minutes of their time as well.

Step Four: Express Gratitude

Whenever you meet with someone, you must **send a thank-you email**. It is professional and respectful and just the right thing to do!

Step Five: Cultivate the Relationship

Invest in the relationship by sending occasional emails (one every two or three months). Inquire into your contact's practice and life, forward an interesting article, or invite the contact to a bar event, a SU event, or a pro bono activity. Develop a practice of sending out handwritten cards to colleagues and professional contacts once per year.

Networking is not schmoozing. It is developing sincere professional relationships; it is building contacts in the legal field.

Start early.

Developing authentic, professional relationships does not happen overnight. It takes time, energy, and thoughtfulness.

Ways to Use a Contact for Help Securing a Job

- Mention in your cover letter that your interest in Firm XYZ was sparked by an informational interview with Associate M who told you great things about the firm's culture and training for new lawyers.
 - Don't overstate your relationship. If you met for an informational interview, use that term.
- Ask your contacts to let you know about relevant professional opportunities.
- Sometimes, a close contact – or a mentor – can serve as a professional reference.
- Let your contact know you applied at Organization RST and request help getting your materials reviewed. Explain you know the position is very competitive but you would appreciate any help ensuring your application is not lost in the stack.
 - You aren't asking for a handout; you aren't asking for preferential treatment. You want to be judged on your merits but you want a shot! A contact can help you get your foot in the door.