

## YOUR NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

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Networking is a critical part of the job search and increases the likelihood of being considered for opportunities:

- Highlight your background and interests to someone who could guide you and potentially serve as an advocate throughout the job search process
- Ask questions about what the employer is looking for and how you may fit the culture
- Organizations may evaluate a candidate's genuine interest by considering whether or not they have had informational discussions with current employees
- In some cases, applications may not be reviewed without a referral
- At times, roles are not posted and are filled exclusively through the networking process

### Step 1: Identify Contacts

Once you've created a Target List of organizations, identify contacts by utilizing the following resources:

- CMS – lists company contacts including alumni and recruiters; alumni are often the best starting point for informational discussions; read employer notes prior to outreach
- Who's Going Where – a spreadsheet of where the class of 2021 interned and where the class of 2020 went full-time after graduation, located in CMS resource library
- SOM Resume Book – a searchable database in CMS so you can network with your classmates
- University alumni directories – SOM, Yale Cross Campus, your undergraduate alumni directory
- LinkedIn – alumni groups, club curated groups, targeted keyword searches
- Conference attendees (including virtual), HireSOM and EngageSOM Contacts

### Step 2: Outreach

- Message should be professional, concise, tailored and thoughtful
- Focus on building relationships, this should be more than a transaction
- Avoid asking about jobs or internships when reaching out
- Request up to 20-30 minutes of the person's time
- Proof thoroughly, if using SOM alumni directory, use the contact method listed as "preferred"
- If you do not hear back, assume the contact is busy or has not read your note; wait at least a week before following up; you may also consider reaching out to a different contact

### Sample Outreach Message

*Dear Ms. Barker,*

*I am a second year student at the Yale School of Management with a background in xxxx, interested in transitioning to a brand management role within CPG. I found your profile in the Yale SOM Alumni Directory, and see that you have had great success in marketing. I would be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you to discuss your experience at SOM and your career path since graduating. Do you have 15-20 minutes to speak over the next couple of weeks? If so, please let me know what works best for your schedule.*

*Thank you very much in advance and I look forward to connecting at your convenience.*

*Best,*

*Todd*

*Personalize where possible: The goal is to demonstrate that you took the time to research and have not copied and pasted a message; examples include: “I noticed that you navigated a similar transition from x to y”, or “that you were heavily involved in x club”, or “that you work in x which is of great interest to me”*

### **Step 3: The Informational Interview**

Informational interviews are conversations initiated by a candidate to learn more about an industry, function, company, role and/or career path.

Preparation is key:

- Research the company and your contact
- Prepare questions, sample topics include career path, daily responsibilities, industry trends, and office culture
- Practice Your Story
- Confirm your meeting by e-mail 24 hours before
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early for in-person; find a quiet space if by phone or zoom
- Dress professionally whether in-person, by phone or via virtual platform

Guidelines for a successful discussion:

- Set the tone by introducing yourself, explain what you intend to get out of the meeting and walk through your story
- Show that you value their time, have done your research, and are genuinely interested in learning
- Ask good questions – follow up on those generated during conversation or those you prepared prior
- Manage the time effectively to not go over, or if necessary politely check if they have more time

### **Step 4: The Close**

At the close, use your best judgement to determine how inclined the person is to help you; potential closing asks include:

- If there is a current opening that you plan to apply to, notify them of this and leave the door open for potential referral (allow them to offer, don't ask for it, don't be discouraged if they don't offer)
- Ask if there are other contacts that they recommend you reach out to
- Ask if they are comfortable with you continuing to update them on your search progress and confirm the best contact information to use

### **Step 5: Post Conversation Follow-Up**

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours after every discussion
- Personalize the note by referencing details from the conversation; keep brief and professional
- Proactively stay connected and send occasional updates to individuals who are especially helpful to you
- Proofread carefully

## **Sample Thank You**

Dear Ms. Smith,

*Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning and for sharing your experience working in the Supply Chain department at Whole Foods. I enjoyed learning about the highly innovative ways in which your team is overcoming the challenge of increasing transportation costs. I am confident that my experience as an Operations Analyst at UPS, as well as my proven success increasing profits through better inventory management at our campus eatery "Food for Thought," has prepared me well to intern in this field over the summer. I have taken your advice and applied both online and reached out to your department lead, Ms. Jones. I will follow up with you over the next two weeks to update you on the process.*

*Thank you very much again for your time and I look forward to keeping in touch in the weeks ahead.*

Best,

John Doe

## **[YOUR NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING RESOURCES](#)**

**CMS** - lists employer contacts including alumni and recruiters; alumni are often the best starting point for informational discussions; read employer notes prior to outreach

**LinkedIn** - Alumni groups, club curated groups, targeted searches utilizing keywords

**SOM Student Resume Book** - a searchable resume database in CMS

**Who Went Where** - A spreadsheet of where recent classes went for internship and post-graduation roles

**Yale SOM Alumni Directory** - Inclusive database of over 8,000 Yale SOM alumni searchable by a variety of parameters

**Yale Cross Campus** - Search alumni and students from across the University, including Yale College and Yale graduate schools and programs. Create a profile to connect with others or engage in industry specific conversations.

**Yale Alumni Shared Interest Groups** - A list of Yale University alumni groups

**Sample Informational Interview Questions**

**Your Network Tracker**



## **WORKSHEET: Outreach Exercise**

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1. Choose a target organization and identify a potential contact to reach out to.
2. Draft a tailored message to set up an informational discussion.
3. Assuming the contact agrees to have the discussion, list 3-5 questions that you would like to ask.
4. Write a thank you note that leaves the door open to future communication throughout the search process.
5. Reflection: Were there parts of this exercise that were more challenging than others? Why do you think that is and what steps can you take to make the networking process more effective?