

Networking

Networking is an excellent way to meet potential employers. It isn't just about running round a room chatting with everyone and collecting their business cards - it's an art and requires careful planning and preparation. The thought of networking events and approaching contacts probably makes you feel nervous but careful preparation will give you the power to feel confident and stand out from the crowd.

Put your networking plan into action and start reaping the rewards today by being well connected in your community.

Planning

- Who are your potential employers?
- Where they are likely to gather/where are you likely to meet them?
- Identify current networking opportunities available
- Who is going to attend? Is this appropriate for you?

Preparation

- Prepare your opening lines - 30 second CV. Certain questions will be asked, e.g. Who are you? What do you do? What are you interested in? Address these questions
- Carry business cards
- Set yourself objectives, e.g. I will talk to 5 potential employers this week.

At an event

- Target people from the attendance list – research them before the event.
- Wear a name badge so everyone knows who you are.
- Make good eye contact
- Smile
- Ask lots of questions.
- Be interested in other people, don't just talk about yourself.
- Collect lots of business cards.

After the Event

- Follow up the contacts you've made by sending an email or making a phone call.
- Use the 90-day rule – keep in contact every 3 months, send a Christmas card, invite them to a show or just to say hello and let them know how you are getting on.

Job Openings

A vast number of job openings in the creative and cultural industries never make it to the newspaper or job boards. Candidates find out about these positions via effective networking. The higher up the ladder you go, the more likely a position will be filled in this way. It is therefore important to build relationships and continuously network with designers, companies and agencies.

Network grid

If the thought of entering a room full of strangers makes you cringe, then relax and take an alternative route. The best way to network is through people you know, start by listing friends, neighbours, co-workers (past /present) and relatives. Don't forget to include people like your tutor. Start with these 'warm' contacts and expand it at trade fairs, exhibitions, end of year shows, on-line communities, associations, information interviews - anytime, anywhere.

Start a simple network grid like the one below:

Type of Contact	Contact Details	How they can help	Comments
Family/Friends			
Work Placement			
Students, tutors, outside lecturers			
Association members			
On-line communities			

First Impressions

First impressions are very important - they take less than 20 seconds, so it's really important to dress appropriately, smile warmly, give a firm handshake and keep your voice calm.

If you're communicating with potential contacts for the first time online, remember you make a first impression in an email too, so be clear, concise, honest and courteous.