Making the Most of the Pitt Career Network

The Pitt Career Network is a database of alumni who are interested in networking with fellow alumni and current students. It can be a great resource for networking with employers and learning about a job, industry, organization, or field. One thing to remember is that the Pitt Career Network is best utilized as an information provider, not a job search site.

1. Self-Assessment
Before you begin searching the Pitt Career Network, identify your career goals and try answering the following questions:
   a. What type of industry do I want to work in?
   b. What working environment/corporate culture do I work best in?
   c. Where (location) do I want to work?
   d. What company size is ideal?
   e. What skills do I have (whether through internships or classwork)?

Understanding some of the above questions will help you initially narrow your search to some target organizations or industries you may want to explore on the PCN.

2. Explore the PCN
Once you have examined your own interests, it is time to explore the Pitt Career Network to find some alumni who share your interests or whose job/career aligns with some of your own personal expectations.

Using the PCN:
- Visit www.alumni.pitt.edu/networking to join
- Narrow your search by incorporating your self-assessment responses into the search criteria listed
- Select “view” to the left of an alumnus you would like to contact
- Review their profile material and select “Contact this Networker” at the top of the page if you would like to network with this person

3. Background Research
Before reaching out to an alumnus, it is best to have a general understanding of his or her company, industry, etc. Much like preparing for a job interview, become familiar with not only the company’s corporate website, but also any recent news posted about the company or industry. See if you have any existing connections with this person through your clubs, organizations, or experiences at Pitt.

If there are any professors or employees at Pitt that you know well, see if they know the person and can give you any insight into how to approach them.

*Having this initial knowledge serves as a great conversation starter!*

4. E-mail Writing
When reaching out to an alumnus on the Pitt Career Network, it is important to remember that it is for exploratory purposes. It is your opportunity to connect and network with professionals who can provide some valuable information on their experiences. The relationships you establish may eventually lead to inquiring about open job/internship opportunities, but it is never how a PCN-established e-mail conversation should begin.

www.cba.pitt.edu/careers
Below is an example of an introductory e-mail to a professional on the PCN:

Subject: Pitt Career Network Contact (*always use this as your subject line the first time reaching out to someone on the PCN)

Hello Mr. McSmith:

By way of introduction my name is Sabrina Trowler. Currently, I am a junior marketing major at the University of Pittsburgh in the College of Business Administration. I was able to obtain your contact information via the Pitt Career Network and I wanted to reach out to you to hear more about your role and responsibilities at Dick’s Sporting Goods.

I discovered that you were a former President of Phi Beta Lambda and I am currently serving as the Vice President of Public Relations. The organization has come a long way, and I think you would be very pleased with how well established it has become within CBA.

Personally, I have always had a strong interest in retail management and sales and I was curious about how you were able to break into the industry. If you have some time over the next few weeks I would like the chance to speak with you further about your professional experiences at Dick’s and how you made the most of your time at Pitt.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you and thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Sabrina

For some final tips, be concise and get all of your important points across without dragging on or going into too much detail. You want to be sure that the person is enticed to read your e-mail and get back to you. Secondly, be organized and state all the necessary facts to properly introduce yourself. Finally, as with all written pieces, be sure to proofread, especially the person’s name and his or her company’s name!

5. Follow-up / Continued Contact

Next steps with a contact on the Pitt Career Network may be in the form of an informational phone interview or a job shadow. At the very least, it is important to continue reaching out to the person via e-mail as they could end up being a very valuable resource in your professional career.

Once you have established a strong enough relationship with the person over time, it may become appropriate to ask about job/internship opportunities within his or her company or industry.

For additional information on how to use the Pitt Career Network, visit www.alumni.pitt.edu/networking. For more information regarding informational interviews, job shadows, or networking, meet with a Professional Development Consultant in CBA Career Services.

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