



NETWORKING

The term "networking" may bring to mind visions of cold calling, overwhelming cocktail receptions, and talking with strangers about uninteresting subjects. So why do it?

The reality is, the single best source for new positions is "word-of-mouth." A startling number of veterinary positions are never posted (about 80%) because qualified candidates learn of positions by talking to someone in their network or employers receive candidate recommendations from personal contacts. This is appealing to employers because they are able to be less reliant on traditional job posting methods, which cost time and money to maintain.

Fortunately, networking can be as easy as talking to your friends and neighbors! The idea is that everyone you meet is a potential lead. If you tell people what field you hope to enter or what type of job you are seeking, any of them may have an acquaintance who offers exactly what you seek.

Take a minute to consider the people in your informal contact list.

- Friends
- Friends of the family
- Co-workers
- OSU CVM Alumni
- Office of Professional Success
- Professors
- Neighbors
- Religious/Spiritual Affiliates
- Members of your softball team
- The person sitting next to you at a holiday dinner party

Networking at Events

Throughout your veterinary education and future career, you will be asked to attend various events including OVMA functions, holiday parties, association dinners, and so on. You should attend these events with the goal of meeting at least one person. Approach such events as an opportunity simply to connect with others.

Professional Associations

Professional associations have meetings and functions that provide an opportunity for students to learn about different veterinary topics, career paths, and to meet veterinarians. You should think about joining the OVMA or the veterinary association of the state in which you plan to live. Most specialties within veterinary medicine have an association as well that you should consider joining and attending the annual conference. For instance, if you are interested in pursuing a large animal career, you should consider joining the American Association of Bovine Practitioners as a way to connect with its members, learn about topics specific to the dairy and beef industry, attend conferences and meetings, and become eligible for different awards, scholarships, and fellowships.

Informational Interviewing

One of the easiest ways to build a professional network is through informational interviews. Informational interviewing offers a method of career exploration and a resource for finding jobs that are not publicly advertised. By contacting people already in your chosen specialty, you have access to "inside information" about career paths, the skills necessary to succeed, and people to contact who may have positions available. However, it is important not to go to these interviews with the sole purpose of trying to find employment. If you tell someone you would like to conduct an informational interview with them and appear only to be seeking a job this will probably be upsetting to your potential contact.

Researching online is a great way to find OSU CVM alumni in which to connect. Try using your status as a future OSU alumnus to get your foot in the door. You may also be able to find individuals via your current network of friends, LinkedIn account, and the Office of Professional Success.

Some questions to ask in an informational interview include:

- How do most people get into this field?
- Would you recommend any specific classes or outside educational experiences that proved to be helpful?
- What skills/personal attributes do you think are essential to being successful in your field?
- What is a typical day like?
- What would you do differently in your career path to get to where you are?
- Could you please look at my resume and give me feedback about what I can do to make myself a better candidate upon graduation?
- Are there other related fields that I should be considering given my interests?
- **Is there someone else that I should contact for advice?**

The last question may be the most important. For every informational interview, you should walk away with at least one more person to contact. In this way, you continue to expand your professional network. Treat an informational interview as a professional meeting.

Be prepared with questions, dress professionally, and arrive on time. Any informational interview could lead to a job, so always be prepared!

Follow Up

After you meet with a contact, it is absolutely essential to write a thank you note. Tell your contact how much they helped you, and refer to particularly helpful, specific advice. Everyone - even the most high-level executive - likes to feel appreciated. In addition to immediate follow-up after a meeting or conversation, keep in touch with your contacts. This way, they may think of you if an opportunity comes up, and they will also be forthcoming with new advice. It's important to stay on their radar screens without being imposing or invasive. And, of course, if you get that new job, be sure to tell them and thank them again for their help.

Stay Organized

Keep a record of your networking. Whether you do this in a notebook, your phone, or in a database file on your computer, it's important to keep track of your contacts. Make sure your system has plenty of room for contacts' names, addresses, phone numbers, companies, job titles, how you met them, and subsequent conversations you've had with them.

Social Networking

Social networking sites like LinkedIn are a great way to find out more about individuals and to learn of employment opportunities. Your LinkedIn profile should be one that is full of insight about you professionally and displays your qualifications and previous experiences. If you would like to learn how to maximize your profile and use it to your advantage, contact the Office of Professional Success to set up an appointment.

What Goes Around Comes Around

If you want to be treated with respect, treat others with respect. If you want your phone calls and email missives returned, call and write back to the people who contact you. If you want big-wigs to make time for you, make yourself available to others whom you might be able to help out. It's that simple.

The higher up you climb in the professional world, the more you'll find that everyone knows everyone else. Thus, if you are impolite, curt, condescending, or disposed to burning bridges, you'll cultivate a reputation that will serve as a constant obstacle. Remember, the people who seem little now will one day be running practices and making decisions. If you treated them with kindness and respect when they were green, they will remember and return the favor later.