



## The Career Center

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### THE ART OF CALLING PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS

You may be asking, “Why do I have to learn how to network? Why can’t I just apply for existing job openings and get hired?” The answer is that you may be able to, but the majority of students do not have enough experience to qualify for even entry level job openings in their field. Our research has shown that only 26% of ECU graduates have been successful in obtaining a job through posted job openings. Most students obtain their first job out of college through networking. Networking is not telling all your friends and relatives that you can’t find a job and need their help. Networking is using your contacts and connections to get to decision-makers within the companies that interest you and talking with them about their NEEDS, not their openings. Initially, those conversations happen over the telephone.

One of the most challenging tasks of networking your way into a new career is picking up the phone and making networking calls. It can be a frightening experience that requires a clear process, training, and practice. This handout attempts to provide you with that process and the tools you will need to make these calls.

There are several types of networking calls you may need to make. Everyone has a set of “personal contacts”. Sometimes these personal contacts are “targeted decision-makers” who can hire you. Sometimes your personal contacts are people you know (even slightly) who can’t hire you but would be willing to help you and will give you “referrals” to others who may be able to help you. Sometimes these referral calls are to targeted decision-makers within your list of key companies. Sometimes they are phone calls to other referrals you don’t know but who you hope will be able to help you. You will also make phone calls directly to targeted decision-makers when you have been unable to get to them through networking.

Each type of call has a slightly different agenda. When calling Personal Contacts (who are not Targeted Decision-Makers) your goals are to:

- 1st Objective: Renew your relationship with this Personal Contact to start them thinking about you and of ways to help you.
- 2nd Objective: Get referrals to contacts in your targeted industries.
- 3rd Objective: Gather additional information that advances your job search campaign.

When making calls to Targeted Personal Contacts (Targets you do know) or Targeted Decision-Makers (Targets you don’t know), your goals are to:

- 1st Objective: Discover needs, problems, or challenges at their company in your areas of interest.
- 2nd Objective: Arrange a meeting in person or by phone to talk about these needs.
- 3rd Objective: Get a referral to others inside or outside the organization who may be able to help you.
- 4th Objective: Gather additional intelligence that advances your campaign.

Even though these calls are difficult to make, if you follow the process defined in this handout, you will be successful in obtaining “meetings” (job interviews) with decision-makers more successfully. Even if they don’t hire you themselves, you will bring yourself that much closer to finding someone who will hire you!

### **NETWORKING CALLS IN BRIEF**

Here are the basics steps you will take to make a successful networking call:

1. Download a copy of the Call Outline for the type of call you want to make from the Virtual Handout Cart on our website: <http://www.ecu.edu/e3careers/forstudents.virtualhandoutcart.asp>
2. Modify the Outline as necessary to meet the needs of the particular call you plan to make (i.e., Is it a Personal Contact? A Referral? A Target?).
3. Print off a copy of the finished Outline and fill it out.
4. Determine what type of Introductory Approach will be most effective and write it on the outline.
5. Review your Power Greeting (see Virtual Handout Cart) and modify it as necessary to fit this call.
6. Create eight open-ended probing questions you want to ask during the phone call. These should include (two each) questions about the industry, the company, the department, and the job you are targeting.
7. Create at least six SAC stories (see the Job Interviewing Handout) covering your experience both in the classroom and on the job.
8. Decide what Trial Close you want to use.
9. Decide what two days and time are the best for you to meet or talk by phone with each person.

### **NETWORKING CALL IN DETAIL**

#### **GETTING THE PERSON ON THE PHONE**

When calling someone you don’t know, ask for him or her by first name. It suggests you already know the person and is more likely to get you through (i.e., "Is Bob available please?")

After you reach that person, address him or her by their last name (i.e., "Good afternoon Mr. Jones, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.")

#### **USE AN APPROPRIATE INTRODUCTORY APPROACH**

It is important that you establish some common ground as a foundation for a establishing a relationship. Review these different options to see which approach will work best for you in each situation:

##### **Referral**

"A mutual acquaintance, Tim Booth, gave me your name and suggested that I contact you. Do you have a minute?"

##### **You Read About a Related Event**

"I read in the Raleigh News and Observer of your new manufacturing facility in Cary and wanted to ask you about the staffing challenges of that facility. Do you have a minute?"

##### **Similar Work Experience**

"I have been working for Belk Department Stores in Women’s Fashion for the last two years and I have been very effective in designing displays for slower moving merchandise in the off seasons. I was hoping you could give me a minute of your time to talk about some of the merchandising challenges you have been facing here at Ann Taylor. Do you have a minute?"

##### **Membership In A Group**

"I understand that we are both alumni of East Carolina University is that right? Well, I found your name in the eRecruiting database at The Career Center on campus and I wanted to ask you a couple of questions. Do you have a minute?"

## POWER GREETING

Give your Power Greeting followed immediately by an open-ended question about the industry (i.e., "What would you say is the greatest challenge facing your industry today?")

## DEVELOP A DISCUSSION

Ask open-ended questions that probe into the needs, challenges, and problems of:

First the industry,

Second their company,

Third their department/division,

Fourth specific need, problems, or challenges you have identified that typically exist in this area.

Do not talk about "openings," "opportunities," or "interviews." Keep your focus on identifying the needs, challenges and problems as perceived by your contact.

As you identify issues, give a SAC as an example of how you have demonstrated your problem-solving skills followed by another open-ended probing question.

## GIVE A TRIAL CLOSE

When you think you have established a good rapport and have talked for at least 5 minutes, give a trial close (i.e., "Do I seem like the type of person who would be a good addition to your team?" or "Can you see where my skills and abilities would be helpful in addressing the challenges we have been discussing?") If you don't receive a positive answer, ask another open-ended, industry specific probing question and continue the discussion process.

## ASK FOR A MEETING

Listen for buying signs. When you begin to hear the contact say "Yes" to your trial closes, or if they begin to try to sell you on their company, ask for a meeting.

Don't ask IF you can get together, ask WHEN would be a good time to meet (i.e., "It seems to me that we have identified a number of areas where I could be helpful to your company. I would like to get together with you so we could talk further about these issues. Would Thursday or Friday be better for you?")



#### IV. SAC Preparation

List the names of ten SAC stories that are likely to be relevant to the questions you plan to ask:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. Asking For A Meeting

Put in your own words exactly what you will say to ask for a meeting.

## PHONE TIPS FOR JOB SEEKERS

### GETTING PAST THE SECRETARY

**Use Implied Familiarity** - Pretend you know them socially or at least informally

“Good morning, is Bob in by chance?”

“Which Bob are you referring to?”

“I'm sorry, Bob Lever, your V.P. of Information Systems.” (Usually they will just connect you).

“May I ask the purpose of your call?”

“Sure, I sent Bob some information in the mail and I am calling to discuss it with him. Is he available?”

If that doesn't work, try calling at 7:45 am, or 12:15 Pm, or 5:15 pm when the secretary is not there and the decision-maker is likely to answer his/her own phone.

### GET THE SECRETARY ON YOUR TEAM

Always get the secretary's name as well as the decision-maker's name. If you are unable to get past the secretary, enlist his/her help.

“Hello Susan, I understand you are the Administrative Assistant for the manufacturing department, is that right?”

“Well my name is \_\_\_\_\_, with East Carolina University. As the Administrative Assistant for manufacturing, you must have a pretty good idea about what makes your department/company a success. I could really use your help, do you have a minute?”

### ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS

You will find that a number of people can give you useful information. Try talking to secretaries, customer service reps, public relations departments, anyone who sees it as their responsibility to talk to the public.

“How does this department impact the rest of the company?”

“How does your company compare to that of your competitors?”

“What are some of the services you'd like to offer customers, but can't right now?”

“How do you see this company changing in the next five years?”

“Who would you recommend I talk with? Would it be alright with you if I used your name in contacting him/her?”

### GETTING THE NAME OF DECISION-MAKERS

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with East Carolina University. My department wants to mail some correspondence to your \_\_\_\_\_ department. I was tasked with calling and getting the name of your

\_\_\_\_\_ Manager and a current mailing address. Would you please spell that for me so I can be sure to get it correct. What exact title does he/she prefer? And what would be the correct mailing address to send that to? Thank you for your help!”

If they ask you what you are sending, just say, "Well, I really don't know, they are still putting it together, but I think it has to do with \_\_\_\_\_ information. I've just been asked to get the contact name and address. What did you say was the name of the Manager?"

#### UNDERSTANDING WHY THE DECISION-MAKER WILL TALK TO YOU

Decision-makers are busy people. Some of you may be worrying about whether or not decision-makers will be willing to take the time to talk with you. The fact is that not every call you attempt will be successful. However, decision-makers have the responsibility of solving the company's problems and they are always on the look out for ways to solve those problems. You bring a fresh perspective and fresh ideas to those problems and if you follow these guidelines they will be happy to take the time to talk with you.

#### EXAMPLE OF A PHONE CALL TO A TARGETED DECISION-MAKER

S = Student, R=Receptionist, P = Prospective Employer

S: Hello, is Jim there by chance?

R: Jim Parson?

S: Yes.

R: Just one moment.

P: Jim Parsons here.

S: Good afternoon Mr. Parsons. My name is Gil Harris. I am completing a degree in Regional and Urban Planning at East Carolina University and I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about the work you do in Community Development for Pitt County. Do you have a minute?

P: How can I help you?

S: Well, first let me tell you about myself. I will be graduating this May with a Bachelor of Science degree in Urban and Regional Planning where I have studied courses very relevant to your work like, urban development, regional planning, housing and neighborhoods, and community planning, to name a few. Last summer I completed an Internship for the New Bern Planning office where I was involved in GIS planning, a transportation study, and some work in environmental planning. I find that I really enjoy the interaction with community members in the field as well as quantitative analysis and mapping.

Let me ask you, what do you think is the greatest challenge facing the field of county development?

P: Well, you mentioned the GIS work you did in New Bern. I'd have to say that technology is still changing so quickly that it's always challenging to stay current with the advanced in GIS systems, especially since technology is so expensive.

S: I certainly understand that. One of the advantages we have at ECU is that the university has a clear mandate to stay current on technology and all of our GIS systems are upgraded every three years. When I was in

New Bern that turned out to be important since they were implementing the new ArcView version 9 software with the new spatial analysis capabilities which I had been using at school since last spring semester.

What GIS systems do you use in Pitt County?

P: Gosh, you are making me envious. So New Bern has upgraded to version 9, huh. I'll have to call the manager Mike Avery and ask him about that. I'm afraid we are still on version 8 and probably will be for another year.

S: Besides the technology issue, what other challenges are you facing this year?

P: Well, I'm sure you have heard of the discussions on where we should put the new jail. Citizens passed a \$20 million bond to allow us to build a new 900 bed jail and the County Commissioners have asked for input from us on our ideas there. The problem is that we are so busy, we really haven't had time to put together a cost comparison for them. I think we could do a good job if we just had the manpower.

S: I remember reading about that. Do I remember correctly that your current jail is 404 beds and that there are some strong voices suggested that the jail should be built downtown?

P: Yes, that's right. I really don't like that idea since we would have to tear down buildings we just bought for over a million dollars.

S: Would you be interested in having someone on your staff who could take over some of that burden, while at the same time help you with the ArcView upgrade to version 9 in the future?

P: Well yes, it certainly would be valuable.

S: It seems to me Mr. Parsons that there are a number of areas where I could be helpful to you. I really thing it would be worth our while to meet face to face to toss around some ideas. Would Thursday or Friday be better for you?

P: Yes, I'd like that. Probably Thursday would be better. I've got a number of meetings on Friday.

S: Morning or afternoon?

P: What about 3:30 in the afternoon. We could talk and then I could give you a tour of our facility.

S: That would be great. So I will see you at 3:30 this Thursday. It's been nice talking to you. Thank you for your time! Good bye.