Networking is like joining a club or an organization that brings together people with similar interests. For law students and lawyers, it’s like joining the “legal club” to learn more about the practice of law, and to further your own career.

Networking is a crucial aspect of your career. It’s a way to make new friends and valuable contacts, learn about different practices and career paths, promote yourself and your employer, acquire new clients, increase your self-confidence, and have some fun. And, it gets easier the more you practice!

**WHY NETWORK?**

- Most post law school jobs are not advertised, so networking puts you in touch with the people “in the know” about career opportunities.
- Networking adds a personal touch to your job search, which helps you stand apart from other candidates.
- Mass mailings rarely pay off – most jobs result from personal contacts.
- Learning networking skills can help you find out about job opportunities.

**STEP-BY-STEP NETWORKING TIPS**

**START WITH THOSE YOU KNOW**

- *Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a legal position* and that you would like to meet and speak with legal professionals. (Tell your family, friends, professors, doctor, dentist, teaching assistants, college classmates, and former employers.)

- *Get an alumni mentor!* To learn about our mentor program, read about it [here](#). Use your mentor(s) as a springboard to more contacts so you can build a network. If it’s more comfortable, start with people you already know or with whom you have some connection.

- *Arrange informational interviews.* Informational interviews can turn into job interviews and offers of employment. They allow you to ask questions that you
often could not ask in a formal job interview – and gain valuable insights into the
nature of work in a given practice area.

For more details on informational interviews, read our Career Office handout,
“Informational Interviews”.

VOLUNTEER, VOLUNTEER, AND VOLUNTEER SOME MORE

Volunteering is a great way to show initiative, enthusiasm and dedication. It’s also a
way to make contacts in the legal community, if networking is daunting.

▪ Help organize a career panel for a student organization. Recruiting local attorneys as
panelists will allow you to establish valuable connections.

▪ Write articles: Contact professors or other attorneys and ask for suggestions for article
topics in areas of law that interest you. Interview and write about specific practitioners
for a legal blog.

▪ Volunteer to help out at local or special interest bar association events.

▪ Volunteer to work the registration table or help out in other ways at school receptions
for alumni attorneys, or at other non-student events like CLEs.

▪ Do the research to find an organization where your “dream job” exists. Then volunteer
at that organization, if a paid position isn’t available. This will get you in the door and
give you the opportunity to be noticed – and appreciated for your skills, initiative,
enthusiasm and dedication.

ATTEND LAW-RELATED FUNCTIONS OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION,
SCHOOL, INNS OF COURT OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

PREPARE FOR THE EVENT – AND GO!

▪ Pump yourself up for the event – dress up a bit, set some initial goals, and practice
introducing yourself.

▪ Have conversation topics ready – be familiar with current events, especially legal
issues, by reading the legal press, web sites, blogs or newspapers.

▪ Bring a friend if you want support, but agree to meet at the end so you’ll spend your
time meeting new people.

EVENT STRATEGIES

▪ Pretend you’re one of the hosts. If you’re busy making others feel welcome, you’ll be
less shy. Introduce people, start conversations, show folks to the food!
• Eye contact and smiles are key. Circulate and try to meet several people.

• Be sure you are conversing more than eating. (Eat before the event!)

• Meet new people, rather than spending all your time with old friends.

• Remember names: Have the person repeat her name when introduced; use her name during the conversation to help you memorize it.

• Convey energy and confidence: a positive attitude and a smile will make people eager to speak with you.

• Ask for a business card at the end of the conversation and say: “It’s been great meeting you. I’m looking forward to contacting you soon to talk further.”

**SAY SOMETHING - ANYTHING!**

• Don’t Wait – initiate the conversation! Ask questions to get people talking.

• Take a risk – talk to strangers. They won’t be strangers once you break the ice. Most people are grateful to be approached at these events! Share information about yourself, and build a dialogue.

• Look for common interests to discuss, but accept brief periods of silence.

**AFTER THE EVENT**

• Write reminder notes on the back of business cards – where and when you met the person, type of practice, topics discussed.

• Follow up on promises made ASAP. If you said you’d send an article, do it now.

• Send personal thank you notes.
CONVERSATION TIPS

Small Talk Topics to Develop

▪ The event you are attending (or its sponsoring organization)
▪ Schools attended (undergrad, grad or law)
▪ Movies; plays; books; sports; concerts; restaurants; current newsworthy events
▪ The person’s company, firm, organization, line of work

Questions to Break the Ice

▪ What do you think of the event?
▪ What type of work do you do?
▪ What firm (organization, agency, office) are you with?
▪ How did you get into your practice area, or specialty?
▪ How do you know the host?
▪ Are you a member of this organization?
▪ How often do you attend these functions?
▪ What prompted you to attend this function/event/class?

F.O.R.M. Technique

F.O.R.M. stands for Family, Occupation, Recreation and Message. These are topics people enjoy discussing, and don’t have to be touched on in any order.

▪ Family – Many people love to talk about their family. For example, asking “Do you have family in the area?” is broad enough to get a single person talking about where she’s from, or a family person talking about his partner or children.

▪ Occupation – As a student meeting lawyers and business people, you’d probably start with this topic. (See sample questions below.) Discussing work is a good time to ask for a business card.

▪ Recreation – people can be passionate about their recreational activities. After a bit of conversation about work, you can ask, “What do you enjoy doing when you’re not working?”

▪ Message – this is where you let them know about you and your interests. For example, “I’m a law student interested in civil litigation and I’m hoping to work at a mid-size firm or a government office this summer.” It doesn’t matter if it’s not their field, because you never know who they may know!

Here are some “Feel Good” questions you can ask people about Occupation – which is likely to be a focus of networking conversations:

▪ How did you get started in your practice?
▪ What do you enjoy most about your work?
▪ What separates your employer from others in the field?
• What advice would you give to someone just starting out?
• What significant changes have you seen in your practice?
• What do you see as the coming trends in the field?
• What’s the strangest or funniest case you’ve worked on?

Remember, most people like to talk about themselves and rarely end a conversation while they’re doing the talking!

HOW TO BRING UP A “BUSINESS AGENDA”

Many people fail to bridge the gap from “small talk” to “big talk.” Others make the mistake of not recognizing the importance of “small talk” at all and jumping right into “big talk” (this can turn people off because they will feel used).

Rather than immediately asking for leads and referrals, first establish a rapport so that person will want to help you. “Small talk” is important because it helps you establish a personal connection.

Here’s an example of how to move from personal to business talk:

Student (after some small talk): “What made you decide to attend this event?”

Lawyer: “Well, as an employment attorney this subject really interests me.”

Students: “I’m interested in this area too. I really enjoyed the employment discrimination seminar at Hastings. Do you represent plaintiffs or defendants?”

Lawyer: “Mainly defendants, but we actually represent a pretty good mix.”

Student: “Do most of your clients settle or do you take most cases to trial?”

Lawyer: “Most of our cases end up settling, although some are very drawn out. I wish I were in the courtroom more, to tell you the truth. . . .”

Student: “I can understand that...I loved my first Moot Court experience and now I’m on a Moot Court team. It’s very exciting.”

            (More of this conversation and then after a few minutes . . .)

Student: “It’s been great to hear about your employment practice. I’m actually considering practicing in this field. Would it be possible to sit down with you sometime for a few minutes to hear more about your background and training and any suggestions you might have for someone who is just starting out?”

Lawyer: “Of course, I’d be happy to. Give me a call sometime.”

Student: “Great! Thank you! Do you have a business card?”
NETWORKING RESOURCES

San Francisco Bay Area

Names, numbers and websites for bar associations can change, so call the State Bar of California at (415) 538-2000 for current numbers, or visit their website at www.calbar.ca.gov. Each county in California has its own Bar Association.

Here are a few of the specialty and minority bars in the Bay Area:

▪ Alameda County Bar Association (www.acbanet.org)
▪ Asian American Bar Association (AABA) (www.aaba-bay.com)
▪ Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) (www.sfbar.org)
  BASF offers numerous committees to join, events to attend, many publications and resources for members.
▪ Barristers Club of SF – Young Attorney division of BASF (www.sfbar.org/barristers)
▪ Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (BALIF) – LGBT Bar Assn. (www.balif.org)
▪ Charles Houston Bar Association (African-American Bar)(www.charleshoustonbar.org)
▪ Contra Costa County Bar Association (www.cccba.org)
▪ Filipino Bar Association of Northern California (FBANC) (http://fbanc.org)
▪ La Raza Lawyers Association of SF (http://larazalawyers.org)
▪ Lawyers Club of SF (www.lawyersclubsf.com)
▪ Marin County Bar Association (MCBA) (www.marinbar.org)
▪ Marin County Women Lawyers (www.mcwlawyers.org)
▪ Queen’s Bench of the Greater Bay Area (www.queensbench.org)
▪ San Francisco Trial Lawyers Association (SFTLA) (www.sftla.org)
▪ San Mateo County Bar Association, San Mateo County Barristers (www.smcba.org)
▪ South Asian Bar Association of Northern California (www.southasianbar.org/)

State Organizations

▪ State Bar of California (www.calbar.ca.gov)
▪ California Lawyers for the Arts (www.calawyersforthearts.org)
▪ California District Attorneys Association (http://cdaa.org/)
▪ California Public Defenders Association (http://www.cpda.org/)
▪ Consumer Attorneys of California (http://www.caoc.com/CA/)
▪ California Women Lawyers (www.cwl.org)

National Organizations

▪ American Bar Association/ Law Students Division (http://www.abanet.org/lsd/home.html)
▪ American Association for Justice (www.justice.org)
▪ National Lawyers Guild (Local chapters in Bay Area) (www.nlg.org)
▪ Minority and specialty bar associations usually have national versions (local bar associations should have contact information)