

A guide to

# NETWORKING

What is networking?  
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Building and Developing Relationships  
Elevator Pitch  
Informational Interviews

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### What is networking?

Networking is something you already do every day. Whenever you get to know a classmate better, talk with a faculty or staff member at Berklee, or meet someone new at a gig or event, you're forming the relationships that make up your network.

Some people think of networking as superficial or only for extroverts, or that it is about taking advantage of other people to get ahead: these are myths. You can talk about your experience and goals in a genuine and authentic way, and focus on maintaining connections with people who understand and care about your vision. Think of your network as your community and support system. You're not just asking for things from others; you will become part of their support network, too.

### Why should I network?

By purposefully taking steps to build and strengthen relationships, you can gather the necessary information and make the connections you need in order to move along the career path of your choice.

The majority of jobs are found by word of mouth, not through online listings. And networking is especially important in the performing arts, which is a very relationship-oriented field.

Through networking you can build a supportive circle of peers, mentors, and even fans. You can learn more about majors, career paths, and internships you're considering, and gain valuable advice from people who've been in your shoes.

### How do I network?

To meet new people, you have to be around new people, so get involved! Join clubs, volunteer, work on or off campus, go to gigs, see shows, and go to Berklee events. Challenge yourself to talk to one new person at everything you go to, or talk more to someone you met only briefly in the past. You can focus on the quality of conversations rather than the quantity of new connections, which may relieve any (natural) anxiety you may have.

Networking is personal and relationship-based at its core, and some of the most common approaches to building and developing meaningful relationships include preparing elevator pitches and requesting informational interviews.

Approach networking events with an open heart and mind, and don't take it personally if things don't work out. You might send a lot of messages and get only a few replies. You might also meet people, not really click, and never talk again. This is okay. It's all part of the process, and the only way to make any connections is to give it a shot.

## Building and Developing Relationships

Start with people you know.

- Friends and family: Reach out and reconnect. Make sure they know your current interests and goals. This way, they are more likely to have you at the front of their minds and to refer people, opportunities, and resources to you.
- Berklee: this is one of the most powerful networks you may not know you already have, and it includes peers, faculty, staff, and alumni you meet at gigs, shows, concerts, meetings, classes, or events.
  - ◆ If you've met someone you want to talk with more, grab a coffee or lunch, or go to office hours. Talk about your interests, and ask for advice.
  - ◆ Keep in mind whether there's a way you can help them, too. Can you work together on a project?
  - ◆ When ending a conversation, always ask, "Who else do you think it might be helpful for me to talk to?" This keeps things moving and builds your web of connections.

Now, for people you don't know yet:

- Alumni are a great place to start; they're more likely to want to help you because of the Berklee connection. LinkedIn is a great way to find alumni. See our LinkedIn guide for more information.
- It's best to meet in person if possible; it's a deeper connection, and people are more likely to remember you. But if they're in a different location, phone or Skype works, too.
- You can also reach out to people at organizations you're interested in who are not alumni. First, see if they're connected to someone you know. Be sure to demonstrate what makes you unique, your goals, and the research you've done. Give them a reason to respond.
- Be persistent (politely!) and genuine. If you reach out and people don't respond, you can follow up a week or two later.

## Elevator Pitch

- Networking can happen anywhere: in the hallway, on the T, walking down the street, or in more obvious contexts like events or classes. Prepare a couple of elevator pitches so that you'll be ready to comfortably and genuinely introduce yourself at a moment's notice. Prepare pitches for different contexts and people that you may meet.
- An elevator pitch should only be about 30 seconds, or around four sentences. It's short enough that you can say it while you're with someone on an elevator.
  - ◆ Come up with phrases and general content to use flexibly, depending on the situation.
  - ◆ Keep it conversational. You don't want to give a sales pitch, you want the person to become interested in you, which will happen if you are genuine and show your uniqueness.
- Practice out loud. You practice your art for hours and hours, so take a few minutes and practice talking about it, too. This will help you sound more confident and natural.

## Informational Interviews

These are short meetings with alumni and others whose career paths you're interested in, who you may or may not already know.

- Do your research: using LinkedIn or asking your professors for suggestions on who to reach out to is a great place to start.
- Request a meeting: make this short, professional, and straightforward.
  - ◆ Be sure to include who you are, why you're reaching out, and what the next step is (e.g., coffee or a phone call).
- During the meeting:
  - ◆ Ask open questions (not "yes" or "no" questions) to encourage them to tell you as much as possible, ask their advice for someone in your position, and close by asking, "Is there someone else you'd recommend who might be helpful for me to talk to?"
- After the meeting:
  - ◆ Follow up and say thank you. Keeping connections is important; otherwise you didn't build a relationship, you just had a conversation.
  - ◆ Send a thank-you note or email within a day or two of talking.
  - ◆ After you've made some progress on the things you talked about, check back in.
  - ◆ Connect with them on social media, and if relevant, attend their events or performances. If you're a performer, invite them to your shows.