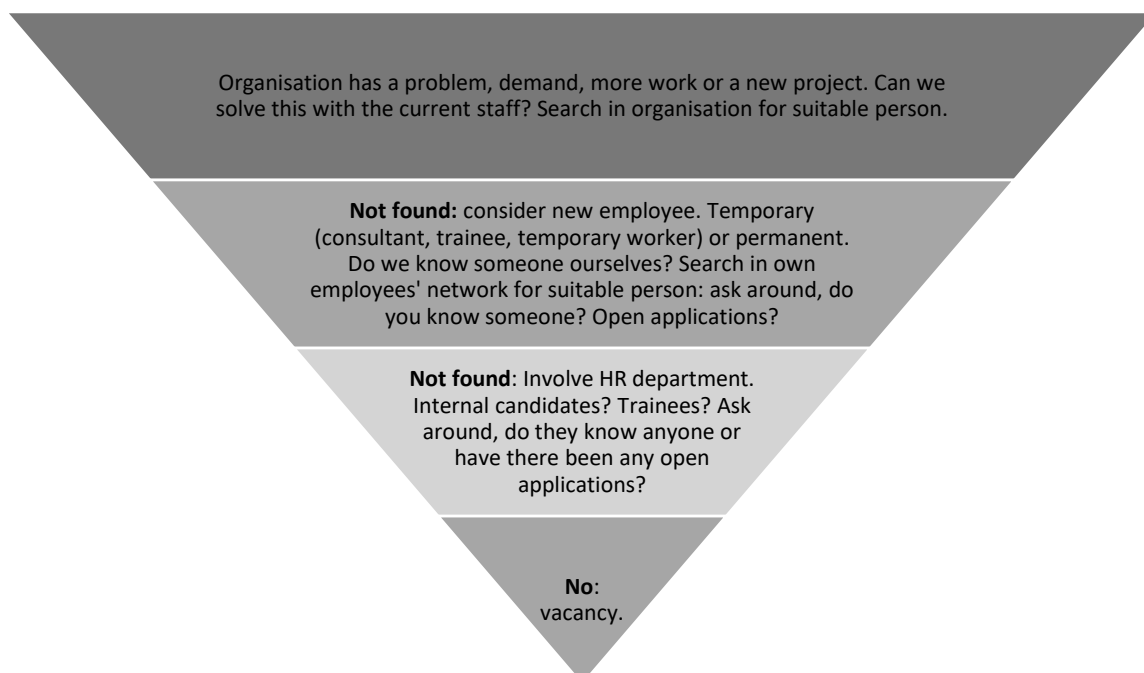


Networking

For years, few positions have been filled through job postings, which means that as an applicant responding only to job postings, you run the risk of missing out on 70% of interesting job postings! It varies somewhat by sector and economic situation, but it is always a significant proportion. It is therefore important to conduct networking interviews, in addition to applying for vacancies.

Below you can see the way a vacancy is often created:



As you can see, many jobs never appear online. And even when they appear online, someone else who came into the picture earlier in the process may be given priority. Ideally, you want to be aware of job openings as early as possible, which increases your chances. There is usually an average of two months between the creation of a job opening and its posting. At each stage, you have the opportunity to engage in conversation and live more about the job requirements. Make sure you stand out positively to your favorite organizations, through a (networking) interview or internship.

Networking is making contacts, both offline and online, to gather information in preparation for future steps. Sharing information and offering help to others is part of it. You are probably already subconsciously networking by sharing tips, ideas and knowledge with those around you (think interesting podcasts, articles or contacts). If you are in conversation with someone about topics you are both excited about or challenges you both struggle with, you will find that networking almost comes naturally and can be very inspiring. Everyone can learn to network by practicing and finding an approach that suits them. So start with it, because it is valuable throughout your career!

Why is having a network valuable?

Your network:

- **Provides insight:** talking to experts gives you "inside information" about functions and the industry. You better understand what's going on, what people are concerned about, what problems, issues or developments there are in the short and longer term. You can submit your ideas, questions and resume, and thus adjust or refine your goals based on advice. In doing so, it offers insight into your skills and self-presentation in a relaxed atmosphere compared to job interviews. You can see yourself as an interesting interlocutor who has valuable information and perspectives to offer: e.g. new scientific insights, visions, ideas.
- **Knows people who are looking for talent:** the more people know that you are available and what you are looking for, the greater the chance that you will be approached for vacancies. In organizations people often ask: "Do you know a suitable candidate?". With a strong network, people can answer, "Yes, I know someone!". Network contacts can thus give you an edge in application procedures and recommendations from others can quickly open doors.
- **Knows people who are interesting to you:** most networking calls are not about getting a job right away; in fact, that often deters you. The point is to get you directed to people who can help you further toward your ideal job. A networking interview has a specific topic (the consulting or information question), which makes it more readily accepted by interviewers who like to talk about their profession.
- **Referrals expand your network quickly:** one conversation can yield an average of two to four new contacts.
- **Networking is proactive.** You take action rather than wait and see.
- **Networking involves less competition.**

By making many networking calls, you develop a skill. You can assess situations better and you lose your sense of hesitation. The number of contacts is now expanding rapidly. It then becomes important to become more selective and focus on those contacts that can bring you closer to your ideal job.

Networking: how to go about it?

Imagine asking an acquaintance for €100. Chances are the other person will hesitate and try to come up with an excuse. But if you rephrase the question, such as: "I need €100,- urgently, for [reason], can you help me think of how to get this quickly?". Someone is now more likely to think along, especially if you explain why you need it. This leaves the possibility that the other person might be able to help you after all. Networking works the same way. It is important to make it clear that you are looking for a suitable position, without expecting that your interlocutor has or knows it directly. It's all about making contact, enthusing and brainstorming together:

- **Making contact:** be a friendly conversationalist. Listen actively, ask questions, show interest, empathize and help the other person.
- **Enthuse:** talk about topics that are important/pleasant for the other person. Identify common ground between you, share ideas and knowledge.
- **Brainstorm together:** give examples and explain what you are looking for, make connections and ask questions that stimulate the other person to think.

Mapping your network

Every person knows about 350 people on average. Your private network consists of everyone who knows you and has a neutral or positive impression of you. Think of family, friends, neighbours, (former) fellow students, (former) teachers, guest speakers, former classmates, study/student/sport association, (former) colleagues, alumni of your program or university.

Perhaps your family, friends or acquaintances do not have the job you dream of, but they too meet all kinds of people every day at work, at the sports club, at birthday parties, are still in contact with former classmates, etc. With 10 friends who in turn know 350 people, you quickly get to 3500 people who could potentially mean something to you! So ask about the careers of people around you or ask questions about the company they work for. Network with people you get along with, which makes conversations go easier. Talk about what you like and find interesting or important. Often you will automatically get suggestions you haven't thought of that can help you.

Consider who to approach at what stage of your search process. If you feel uncertain and want to gain experience, start with someone you know (a little) or with people you least expect. That way you can practice and ask for feedback in a safe environment.

Before you approach someone, gather information and take time to think:

- What is your goal? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to discuss? In what time frame?
- Where or with whom could you find out more? In what direction might the contact refer you?
- If you are going to contact a person, what information can you already find out about that person?
- What do you already know about the organization? What is their product, how does their process work? Use the website, annual reports, mission, vision, social media, etc. as sources.
- What questions or assumptions do you have?
- What could you do for the other person?
- What do you want to address? Which questions/topics are most important? Choose a few.

With this you achieve that you are a good, motivated and interested interlocutor.

Networking with people you do not know (well)

You can ask for an interview by phone, social media (LinkedIn) or email. With people you know, phone is most convenient. With people you don't know, it's better to first write an e-mail/LinkedIn message explaining your intent. Always explain how you got someone's name and contact information. Ask if someone has time to talk to you. Indicate when you will contact them by phone to discuss the response to your message. Provide or ask for confirmation of your appointment by mail yourself.

- **Calling:** below you can find a general outline for a phone call to a stranger, to schedule a networking appointment. You can also use this outline as a basis for emails. Adapt the text to your own taste, style and words. It is important that you keep the initiative and indicate at the end of your message how you want to continue the contact in the future.
 - **Mention your name and ask if it is convenient for you to call now:** if not, ask when it is convenient, but keep control. Avoid leaving your number, to avoid not being called back or at an inconvenient time.

- **Mention the referrer's name:** the only thing you have in common in this first moment of contact with a stranger is the fact that you apparently both know the same person. And if you want to make contact quickly, it is important to find "common ground" quickly. Indeed, often the appointment comes about because people feel obligated to the referrer. There is no need to feel guilty about that, but you can use it appropriately.
- **Briefly explain that you are orienting yourself to the job market:** it should be clear that you are looking for information with the ultimate goal of finding a new job. The disadvantage of this comment in many cases is that your interviewer might think that you are more or less coming to him to ask for a job. This may evoke resistance. Still, it is good to indicate what the ultimate goal of your call is. However, you should immediately remove any possible resistance by indicating that you do not expect the other person to know a job for you.
- **State the purpose:** indicate that your caller can be helpful with information and advice. At this stage, mentioning the referrer again, who, after all, put you on his trail (he would know a lot about the subject), can help make him feel important. Do tell what you are looking for information about, but try not to be too specific to avoid starting to give answers right off the phone. You really want to come to the table. If you want to be remembered and get further referrals, that works much better in a personal conversation than over the phone.
- **Set the agenda:** ask if the other person has about one hour (or shorter) in which you can talk a little about your background and ask specific questions. Agree on the date and time.
- **Prepare for questions about you and your background** so that you can answer them succinctly.

Connecting through LinkedIn: always include a personal message when you make a connection. Then people are more likely to accept your invitation. Below are some examples of messages you can send. Realize that not everyone views LinkedIn regularly. If you haven't had a reaction after a week, try to approach the person in another way, for example via e-mail or telephone.

Examples:

Dear [name],

The lecture/lecture on ... was very interesting! Thank you very much again. I would like to stay informed about your work. Yours sincerely, ...

Hello [name],

I see that you are working as ...(position). I am in the process of job orientation and your job sounds interesting. Do you have time to tell me more about it? Warm regards, ...

Dear [name],

I see that you also studied [study] at Radboud University. I am orienting myself for a job and would like to talk to you about how you ended up at ... (name of organization).

Kind regards,

Hi [name],

I read with interest your blog about . Would love to keep in touch with you via LinkedIn.

Kind regards,

Conducting a networking conversation

- **Open up:** introduce yourself nicely. Furthermore, every conversation begins with an informal part: small talk. Name a commonality (group, education, contact/referrer, company, study association) and anticipate the reaction of your interlocutor, make room for small talk. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do', i.e. match your speaking pace, word usage, behaviour to the person you are talking to. When you feel it is time to get to the point, continue with the introduction.
- **Introduction:** Your interlocutor is probably wondering how you even know each other, and what you are here for. Talk about the reason for the conversation. State your purpose of the conversation, for example that you are orienting yourself to the job market and that your referrer indicated that your conversation partner is well versed in it. Also state clearly that you do not expect a job from the person, but that they can be helpful with info and advice. Then make a proposal for the duration of the interview.
- **Exchange information**
 - telling about the reason why you are looking for a new job is less important, but in a few minutes briefly explain who you are and finish with the direction in which you are orienting.
 - You have prepared a small number of questions or topics, you can now raise them. The conversation should not become a question-answer interview. It is also necessary for you to introduce and test ideas.
 - It can also be interesting to hear how your interviewer himself got to this job: what education and career path did he follow? If you think you are dealing with a "talker," it is best to ask this question at the end.
 - You can present your resume and give a brief explanation, then explain your career plan and ask for a response. Or you can ask for training/course suggestions.
 - Often the interviewer has a good understanding of the opportunities, customs and habits in the labour market of his field. He may have had to fill vacancies himself, so he has an idea of the desired profile of possible candidates. Moreover, he is in a network of colleagues in his field and keeps up with his professional literature. As a result, the interviewer can provide you with information that may be particularly useful for how you might enter the job market. This can also apply to adjacent fields, which may also be of interest (or more interesting).
 - Did the conversation bring up issues that you know more about than your interviewer, i.e., that you could be of service to him? Think of an interesting article, or an interesting name or organization.
 - Finally, ask your interviewer if he knows other people with whom a conversation about your plans could also be useful (do ask permission to mention his name when making contact with these people).

The essence of the conversation is that you make contact, get your interlocutor thinking and possibly get him enthusiastic. This is certainly not possible if you only ask questions; show some of yourself. Take notes during the conversation. Do not get distracted by your phone or other things and keep your attention on the person you are talking to.

- **Closing:** briefly summarize what was important to you in the conversation. Agree on how you will keep in touch if necessary (e.g. email / LinkedIn) and how you will contact the referral received. Thank your interviewer for the conversation and time. If you want to "cut off" a conversation (e.g., at a conference), do so politely. Indicate that you would still like to speak with others.

- **Afterwards:**
 - Send an email thanking them for the conversation and the time. Briefly state why the conversation was helpful to you and what your further plans may be. Check if there are any ways you can inspire or help the other person, e.g. by sharing an interesting article, video, podcast, etc. Don't feel burdened if you can't give something back right away. Who knows how you can mean something to someone in a while.
 - Connect with the other person via LinkedIn, and refer to your conversation in your connection request.
 - Make a report of the conversation for yourself, emphasizing the new insights the conversation provided for you. Also make a note of what you thought went less well and things you might want to handle differently in a future conversation.
 - Make arrangements with those referred.
 - If you start having more conversations, you will find it useful to keep simple records. In it you record, for example, with whom you have had conversations, the dates of the conversations, the follow-up appointments that came out of them and the contacts that were made. You can save your notes in a folder.

Pitfalls

- **Recruiters:** usually it is not wise to have a networking conversation with someone in human resources, unless of course you are looking for a position in the human resources field. Personnel officers are not experts in your field and therefore often find it difficult to assess your value and tell you more substantively. Moreover, they also usually can't refer you to people outside the organization in a targeted way, nor do they always have visibility into job openings.
- **Push off:** When making an appointment, do not let yourself be fobbed off by a secretary or employee who keeps the mailbox. Try to make sure that you yourself are the one who contacts again if the person in question is not present. Also, don't get into a discussion about why the call was made. Do mention the name of the previous caller who gave you the name of this person.
- **Poor preparation:** make sure you are well prepared. It can cause irritation to the interlocutor if you ask questions, the answers to which you could have known. The above piece has already mentioned a number of ways to obtain information about companies and institutions.
- **Conversation time:** don't let a conversation linger! If you have asked a person for half an hour or an hour of their time, it is your job to guard this time. Even if the conversation is going so well and it really clicks between you, someone may feel cheated afterwards if they unknowingly spend an extra half hour. If the conversation threatens to run out of time, make the interviewer aware of this so he can decide how much more time to spend on this conversation.
- **Job:** don't be tempted to ask about a job. The interviewer will then have to sell "no" and he usually finds that very annoying. Should there happen to be a vacancy within his organization or elsewhere for which you could be considered, he will think of it himself. In cases like this, the interviewer still has to ask others first.

Maintaining your network

- Maintain your good name: do not refer people if you doubt their motives.
- Networking is based on mutual trust.
- Treat your network with care and invest in your relationships. Do not just 'come and get it', but also give feedback on what it has brought you and help others.
- Do not forget who helped you, always say thank you. If someone gave you a tip that you followed, let them know what the result was.
- If you received a great tip, a small thank-you (a bunch of lowers, a bottle of wine, a personal thank-you) is probably appropriate.
- If you receive a tip that is not useful to you, remember it, perhaps you can help someone else with that tip. Let the tipster know.

Online networking

- Join newsletters and follow interesting people/businesses on social media;
- Make sure your offline and online personal branding match;
- Know what keywords or terms are used to find information or people;
- Make sure people can find you online, use key-words;
- LinkedIn: make sure your profile looks good and matches your resume;
- Finally, try to arrange a real appointment.

Offline networking

Offline networking is just as important as online networking. Furthermore, people now see you in real life which means that they can get a picture of you even better. Offline network opportunities include:

- Career fairs, conferences, receptions or other (networking) events
- Birthdays
- (Telephone/online) appointments
- Training, study or course, e.g. interesting guest speaker
- 'Work shadowing' – shadow someone for a day at work or ask if you can work in the organization's office for a day to get a taste of the work atmosphere.

Help with networking

Do you struggle with networking conversations? Then make an appointment with a Career Officer from your faculty so we can work together to see how you can improve yourself in this regard.

Appendix: Example questions

Remember, almost everyone likes to talk about their job, so they will want to talk about it with you as well. Assumptions are deadly: if you 'think' you know something but you are not 100% sure, ask. The goal of the conversation is to discover if a company/ job is really for you and obtain important background information that you can use during the job application process. Show that you have done your research and ask for specific information about developments at the company, the culture, a typical working day, the hiring policy and job application tips.

About the position

- What does a regular workday / workweek look like for you?
- What are your tasks and responsibilities?
- What was a great moment in your job this week?
- What do you like the most / find most interesting about your job?
- What are the most important skills for your job?
- What kind of knowledge do you use most?
- In general; what does someone need to bring to be able to do your job properly?
- What kind of person do you need to be in terms of qualities, interests and motives?
- What kind of challenges do you face in your job?
- What is the difference, according to you, between this position and [other position]? What are the similarities?

About the person

- What did you study?
- What kind of work did you do before you got this job?
- What are things you would like to learn or develop in the future? E.g. planning to do a training / course / follow-up education?
- Which people have been your most important teachers or inspirations?
- How did you get your job?
- Which steps did you take to get to this point?

About the organisation

- How is the organisation structured?
- What is the company culture like? What are the positive sides and pitfalls according to you?
- What should someone be like to fit within this company?
- What does the recruitment policy / application procedure look like at this organisation? - ask if you could possibly speak to someone at HR
- What makes you proud of the company that you work at?
- What are some of the challenges that the company faces at the present time?
- What does the future from the company look like? What are the most important focus points of the organisation for the next 5 years (vision)?

About the industry

- What are the positive sides, and what are the pitfalls in this industry?
- What are the differences between this industry and [other industry you're contemplating]? What are the similarities?
- What should someone be like to fit within this industry?
- What does the recruitment policy / application procedure look like within this industry?
- What are some of the challenges this industry faces at the present time?
- What are some of the important developments that are happening within this industry?

Other

- I am orienting on the job market, do you know someone else that I could talk to / be interesting for me to get in touch with?
 - Do you know of any events coming soon (e.g. congress, network meetings) that could be interesting for me?
 - Do you know any interesting books, articles or websites for me to read?
 - What does the recruitment policy look like within your organisation?
 - Can I help you with something? E.g. get in touch with someone, forward information/articles?
 - Can I send you my CV?
 - Can I connect with you on LinkedIn? Can I get your business card?
 - Would you mind letting me know if you come across something interesting for me?
 - Do you have any other tips for me?
- 

Appendix: example conversational report

NAME:

ORGANIZATION:

FUNCTION:

RELATED BY:

DATE MEETING:

DATE THANK YOU LETTER:

Purpose of conversation:

Advice/Tips:

References:

What did I agree/promise:

What new questions or ideas did this conversation generate:

What is my next step:

Other comments: