



NETWORKING GUIDE *for* International LL.M. Students



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I. INTRODUCTION -- THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

Networking will potentially be the most important aspect of your career search. Approximately 60-80% of jobs are part of the “hidden job market.” These jobs are never advertised; include vacancies that are about to occur; and are ultimately filled through word of mouth. Since hiring someone is a risk, employers would prefer to interview and retain someone who they know personally, or who comes recommended by someone they trust.

In order to find jobs, you need to be in the information loop. How do you get into the loop? By contacting and cultivating people you know such as family and friends, former and current Professors, previous employers *and* people you are willing to meet. That is why networking is not only important, but essential, in any job search. Each contact can lead to additional unexpected contacts, if you ask the right questions and know how to effectively "network." Advice, information and referrals are all outcomes of proper networking and invaluable tools for a job search.

II. WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is an art-the more you do it, the better at it you will become. Networking is about relationships, building professional contacts and having those contacts get to know you and your goals. It is a process centered around obtaining information on strategies for achieving your career goals, advice and referrals **WITHOUT DIRECTLY ASKING FOR A JOB**. In many instances, networking can lead to an actual job.

III. PURPOSES OF NETWORKING

- To develop contacts and to obtain knowledge about a particular practice, specialty area, firm or company, or legal community;
- To discover how to arrive at your specific career goals, narrow your career choices and establish an agenda to help you get there;
- To assist you with information about a career change;
- To obtain additional leads to jobs;
- To validate your choice of career by speaking to someone who actually works in that field; and
- To practice your interviewing skills.

IV. THE GOALS OF NETWORKING

- To meet someone who will either refer you to a potential employer, **OR** ultimately hire you for a position.
- To build strategic partnerships or relationships that will assist you in the future with your business and career choices and development.

V. IDENTIFYING YOUR NETWORK

Proper networking involves a wide array of people and sources (not just attorneys), such as your parents, other relatives, friends, previous and current employers and co-workers, career counselors, professors, law school administrators, previous and current classmates, college and law school alumni, acquaintances from church or community groups and individuals you deal with on a regular basis (e.g., your doctor, dentist and banker). Even if these sources cannot direct you to a job, they may be able to assist you with your resume, cover letter or interviewing skills; clarify your goals; and provide you with information regarding career development.

VI. THREE-STEP GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Step 1: DEVELOP YOUR CONTACTS

- Volunteer**
Volunteering with public interest organizations, law firms and companies is an excellent way to develop professional contacts because you are exposed to practitioners on a daily basis. It also increases marketability and sharpens legal skills. Graduates gain permanent employment with organizations after completing voluntary positions with them.
- Become Active in Bar Associations**
Bar association functions present many opportunities to build professional relationships. Most state bar associations have “Law Student” sections. When you attend bar association events, you are in direct contact with the people you most want to speak with about your job search—practicing attorneys. If you are interested in a particular area of law, seek out specialty groups (e.g., International Law Society among others).
- Professional and Trade Associations; Civic/Religious/Social Organizations; Student On-Campus Organizations**
It is also a good idea to become active in professional or trade associations. As you become acquainted and involved with people in various community organizations, such as your church, the local chamber of commerce or your embassy or consulate in Miami.

Even if you do not join any particular student group, be aware of all the lectures, panel discussions, workshops and other activities scheduled at the law school, and make it a point to attend and mingle.

□ **Attend Social and Professional Events**

Do not underestimate the value of a social function for networking purposes. It is surprising how meeting someone at a cocktail party, happy hours, wedding, luncheon, dinner party or golf game can lead to a conversation and, ultimately, to an opportunity. If you attend or participate in a social activity, ask a friend or the host of the specific function to introduce you to the other guests/participants. You can also introduce yourself, talk and ask questions. Small talk about what you do, and sincere questions about the other person's life and career, can start the ball rolling. If you sense that someone is turned off when you begin to discuss work, you should immediately change the subject. However, if all goes well, and you feel a rapport develop, you can end the conversation by exchanging business cards or phone numbers and by expressing your interest in speaking to the contact or getting together in the future. You can then follow up in a couple of weeks.

□ **Contact Alumni**

Contact UM alumni, as well as alumni from your home country. You can find fellow attorney alumni by doing an advanced search on the Martindale-Hubbell website (www.martindale.com). These contacts are typically more comfortable to make because you share a similar educational background with them. Keep in touch with your mentor and try to meet previous LL.M. students as well.

□ **Job/Career Fairs**

Job and career fairs are events designed to unite the best job candidates with the respective employers. Career fairs can also be informational, insofar as they invite different organizations and firms from different practice areas.

These fairs are typically coordinated by consortium organizations, colleges and also law schools. They are ideal for networking (even the informational fairs) because potential employers are present exactly for the purpose of recruiting suitable people and/or giving the necessary information about their organization. It is a tremendous opportunity to network with several different individuals in a short period of time and with little effort. The University of Miami School of Law participates in numerous job fairs with other law schools and organizations such as the New York Job Fair.

□ **Write Letters**

You can generate networking contacts using legal periodicals, such as the Daily Business Review and the Florida Bar Journal. Keep up with current events to see who is active in the areas of law that interest you. Write to them to say that you read about their work, share an interest in the field and would like to meet with them for an informational interview.

The Internet

The Internet can assist you with mailing lists, chat groups, bulletin boards and newsgroups for your individual needs.

Classmates; Family, Friends, and Acquaintances; Former Employers and Colleagues; Professors

Check in with your law school, former law school classmates to make contacts who might be able to provide guidance. Let your family and friends know that you are looking for contacts. Call former employers for information and more contacts. Professors whom you know, and for whom you have done good work, will usually be glad to recommend you.

Step 2: HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK

1. Informational meetings (lunch/coffee)

Before you go to the meeting, make sure that you research what the person does, get to know his/her professional information and prepare a list of questions you would like to ask your contact, a sample of which is provided below:

- What advice do you have for someone seeking to enter this field?
- Are there any professional associations I should join that would put me in contact with other (international) attorneys?
- Would you review my resume and provide feedback?
- Do you know of any other people to contact who might be able to provide me with further information on _____?

2. Informational interviews

An informational interview is an invaluable tool for obtaining information about career choices, learning more about an area of practice and finding a job. It can be one of the best ways to learn about a particular practice area or specialty while, at the same time, making potential contacts and networking.

It gives you an opportunity to obtain suggestions and advice regarding their practice area, the legal community and the best ways to achieve your goals. It is a "quick" mentoring session which can also lead to an actual mentoring relationship. **It is not a job interview, although it may eventually lead to a job offer.**

Some of the benefits of informational interviewing are that it:

- allows you to determine whether the career, industry or company matches your skills, interests and expectations; -
- confirms information that you have read;
- assists you in organizing your future job search by revealing the best ways to get into the profession;
- provides tips and information about the job and career field that could be of great value in preparing applications and job interviews;
- gives you an opportunity to see the organization from the inside.

Informational Interview Guide

Be prepared. Prepare well in advance. You might begin with a self- assessment. The better you know yourself, the more likely you will pursue a career that is both enjoyable and rewarding.

Set up an interview. Once you know who you want to interview with,

- e-mail or write the person you wish to interview well before the date the interview would take place;
- introduce yourself and explain who you are (e.g., a first-year law student);
- state the type of work you are interested in researching, the reason why and the amount of time it would take to conduct the interview (usually 20 - 30 minutes);
- thank the person for speaking with you and confirm the date, time and location of the interview.

Pave the way. When you network outside of your inner-circle, give the contact a good reason to talk with you. An easy way to do this is to:

- Ask the referring person to call ahead, or
- Ask the referring person if you could use their name as an ice-breaker at the top of a contact letter or e-mail. For example, “Mary Smith suggested that I contact you.”

Conducting the interview. After introducing yourself, stick to a short, but thoughtful list of questions. For example:

- Can you tell me about your experiences doing this type of work? ...about the path you took to get to this point?...about a typical day for you?
- What do you enjoy most about your work? What do you least enjoy?
- Should I emphasize different things in my resume or cover letter?
- What type of writing sample would you suggest including, if appropriate?
- Do you have any recommendations for additional people with whom I can speak regarding this?

- Thank you very much for your time and advice. It has been very helpful.

Step 3: FOLLOW UP

Always thank your contacts for the information they provide. A thank you letter or an email detailing the steps you have taken since contacting them is sufficient. It is usually recommended to send it within 48 hours. Example:

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me yesterday afternoon. I appreciate the information and advice you provided. I will follow-up with _____ as you suggested. Thank you once again for your time.

VII. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR NETWORKING AND STAY ORGANIZED

Be organized. Maintain a log or some type of record of all your networking efforts (you can use excel). Remember, you are establishing contacts that you intend to have a while, not just momentarily to locate a job. At a minimum, this log should include:

- The name, address and telephone number of each contact;
- The name of the person who referred you to each contact;
- The date and time you last spoke with each contact, as well as the subject of the discussion and any follow-up that needs to be done;
- Any correspondence between you and each contact;
- The results of your interaction(s) with each contact;

You should also maintain:

- An up-to-the-minute calendar of critical dates;
- A "job search" file or notebook for contact and networking information, employer information, correspondence, calls, interview dates, thank-you notes, and work experience;
- Updated copies of your cover letter, resume, transcripts, writing samples, and other materials on hand at all times (make sure to have good stationery for cover letters, resumes and thank-you letters);
- A card file to attach business cards you collect while networking.

VIII. GOLDEN RULES OF NETWORKING

- **Be Prepared and State Your Purpose Early.** Do research on the particular individual, organization and job you are interested in prior to meeting with your contact so that you can speak intelligently about what you want. Be prepared at your initial discussion and state your purpose. Give a quick summary of who you are and what you want (if the contact was referred to you by someone else). Also, have questions and topics to discuss.
- **Be Flexible.** Take into account the person's schedule and time. Make sure that a person is available to speak with you when you make your initial contact. If he/she is not, ask when it would be a good time to speak to that person or to set up a meeting. Do not pressure anyone into speaking or meeting with you.
- **Never Ask For A Job.** Ask your contact for information and referrals, not for a job. Your contact will be more helpful if you ask her/him for things she/he is able to provide. Ask for information about career opportunities, advice, a critique of your resume, etc. Make the person feel at ease by immediately asking for information and advice - NOT A JOB! Your contact may have been burned in the past by people who claimed to be seeking information but asked for a job when the contact's defenses were down. If she/he is favorably impressed, s/he will be certain to pass on information about potential jobs to you.
- **Focus On Your Contact.** When you meet with a contact, focus on her/him, not on yourself and your needs. You have chosen these people for a good reason - they are working in the area you want to explore, they are employed by an organization you would love to work for, they live in the area of the country where you want to locate, etc. Ask them questions about themselves.
- **Be Courteous.** Listen attentively and respond intelligently. Do not overstay your welcome.
- **Give Positive Feedback and Follow-Up.** The contact has provided you with a valuable service. Make sure to acknowledge this both in person and in writing. After the meeting or discussion, follow-up with a thank-you letter.
- **Exchange Business Cards.** Ask for a business card and you could contact the person in the future with questions. Do not repeatedly call your contact after the initial meeting. Whenever you meet someone new, exchange business cards. Even if you are a student or unemployed, you should have business cards printed for such occasions - be sure to include your telephone number and e-mail address.

- **Keep Good Records.** Know with whom you spoke, when you spoke with them and the substance of the conversations. Then, when you contact them for a second or third time, you will not embarrass yourself by asking the same questions.
- **Do Not Blatantly Offer Your Resume.** Do not offer your resume for circulation to others, unless it is requested. However, you can ask for a critique of your resume (this is a good way to show your resume without pressuring the contact for a job).
- **Offer Assistance.** Always ask what you can do for your contact - networking is a mutual relationship

IX. RESPONSES TO COMMON NETWORKING QUESTIONS

I will not obtain a job through networking.

Approximately 20% of all job vacancies are advertised. The remaining 80% are filled by word of mouth. Networking is virtually the only way to find out about these openings.

What is the point of networking?

Faced with similar resumes, employers typically prefer to hire the candidate they know in some way other than the one that they know only in an interview setting.

I'm really shy, and don't like to mingle.

There are less intimidating settings than cocktail parties and receptions in which to network. Choose the networking methods in this guide which fit your personality.

Do mass mailings work?

Mass mailing is an easy way to communicate with employers you have never met because the blow of a rejection is muted. Sending out hundreds of letters at a time can also make you feel that you are doing something *usually generate a poor response rate*. Consider the effort you must expend on following up on the letters that you produce, the cost of stamps and paper, and the time it takes to craft a proper cover letter. Networking is not quite as comfortable as sending out a mailing but it is more effective. You have to break out of your comfort zone to develop contacts, but networking gets you into the market rather than home in front of your computer churning out letters. Once you start networking, you will find it becomes easier with each new contact.

Sample Networking Letter Format

Return Address

Date

Name
Title
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

Paragraph 1 Establish your relationship to the recipient and explain why you are writing. Include a sentence or two about your strengths and interests. For example: As an international LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law, I am contacting you regarding international law opportunities in Miami. I would value your opinion as to those individuals and/or organizations that would respond favorably to my background in the international law arena.

Paragraph 2 Describe your educational background and practical experience, and then link those experiences to your career interests. Explain what is appealing to you about the work that the recipient is doing and how it relates to your interests.

Paragraph 3 Mention that you will contact them “during the week of...” (usually within 2-3 weeks) – and then make sure to do so. If you will be in the area on a certain date (Example: you will be in NY), and can meet for an interview with the contact, let him/her know.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here
Type Your Name Here

**SAMPLE
NETWORKING
LETTERS**

Sample Networking Letter 1
Informational Interview Request -Alumni

Pedro Suarez
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

November 14, 2013

UM Alumni
Partner
Name of Company/Firm
456 Main Street
Miami, FL 33333

Dear Mr. Alumni:

As a foreign LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law, I am contacting you concerning international law opportunities. Upon completing my LL.M. degree, I intend to work in this field. I would value your opinion as to those organizations that might respond favorably to my business and international law background.

As a Venezuelan attorney, I took courses in international law at Universidad Santa Maria, Facultad de Derecho and served as the President of the International Law Society on campus. My studies at the University of Miami School of Law have heightened my interest in international business transactions. Since your firm is a leader in international business law, I am interested in any information you could provide about such opportunities in that field.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review, and would appreciate any comments you may have for its improvement. I will contact your office the week of December 1st to discuss this in further detail. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Sample Networking Letter 2
Informational Interview Request

Sofia Lopez
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

September 14, 2013

UM Alumni, Esq.
General Counsel
Company Name
456 Main Street
Los Angeles, California 33333

Dear Mr. Alumni:

I am a LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law, and a fellow Licenciada en Derecho of Universidad de Barcelona in Spain. I am considering concentrating my studies in international alternative dispute resolution. In light of your recent article in *California Lawyers Weekly* regarding international mediation programs, I decided to write to you to request an informational interview.

Given your experience, I would be interested in tapping into your wealth of knowledge in this field. I would like to hear your perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of the practice area and its future potential, and obtain any insight you may have regarding opportunities within the field. I would appreciate any assistance you could offer in the form of an informational meeting, at your convenience.

As such, I have enclosed my resume for your review. Please feel free to contact me at (305) 123-4567. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Sample Networking Letter 3
Referral Informational Interview Request - Referral

John Petit
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

September 5, 2013

Referral Name
Associate Counsel
Name of the Corporation
456 Main Street
Miami, FL 33134

Dear Ms. Referral:

Professor Humpty Dumpty suggested that I contact you regarding international criminal law opportunities for foreign lawyers. Upon my graduation from the LL.M. program in May 2015, I intend to stay in Miami for a year and then go back to France.

In France, I had the opportunity to serve as a Legal Advisor with the Office of the Attorney General, Especial Criminal Enforcement Division. In addition, during my first semester in the LL.M. program, I took International Criminal Law, International Arbitration and Comparative Criminal Law. While these experiences have heightened my interest in international criminal law issues and the role of a lawyer in such offices, I am also interested in any information you can provide about potential positions in the private sector.

I have enclosed a copy of my resume for your review and would appreciate any comments you may have for its improvement. I will call your office on Thursday, December 14th to discuss this request further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Thank You Letter

John Petit
123 Maple Drive
Nowhere, Florida 33333
(305) 123-4567

December 14, 2013

Referral Name
Associate Counsel
Name of the Corporation
456 Main Street
Miami, FL 33134

Dear Mr. Referral:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to discuss your position as Associate Counsel. I am excited about the possibility of working in this field, and I know my graduate background in international criminal law has prepared me to research, draft, and analyze the necessary issues and cases.

Based on your recommendations, I have contacted the international criminal consulting group in New York. Thank you again for your time. You have made the job search process considerably less arduous. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to you in the future.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Updated July 2015