

Industrial Relations and Human  
Resources Student Association

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**IRHRSA**  
**2023-24**  
**Edition**



# **NETWORKING 101**

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A networking guide CIRHR  
students for CIRHR students

**PREPARED FOR :**

IRHR, WOO, and CHRP  
Students



# ABOUT IRHRSA

The IRHRSA is an organization of undergraduate Industrial Relations and Human Resources students at U of T. It is an official member of the Arts and Science Students' Union (ASSU). Its purpose is to enhance the experience of IRHR students beyond the classroom by organizing social and career-related events.

IRHRSA sponsors events to help students prepare resumes and prepare their interview skills; attends the HRPAC Conference as a group; and organizes a very successful networking event, which enables students to meet professionals from various organizations in Toronto.

[HTTPS://IRHRSA.SA.UTORONTO.CA/](https://irhrsa.sa.utoronto.ca/)

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# NETWORKING

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## DEFINITION

**Networking is an activity where people come together to share experiences and learn from those experiences. Networking is not only about having someone that may refer you to a job, but to develop a community of people to learn from, and who can contribute to your professional and personal growth.**

Building professional relationships within your industry or field is what professional networking is all about. To form a lasting relationship, it is crucial to be genuine and authentic in your approach. Building trust should be the first step in creating a relationship. Remember, a relationship is a two-way street. Therefore, both partners need to gain something from the conversation and the relationship you are building. Effective communication is the key throughout this process, which involves active listening and asking questions while being clear and concise about what you have to say. Additionally, you should show appreciation for their time and effort in meeting you and be reliable and dependable. Lastly, remember to stay in touch with your connections!

# WHY NETWORK?

## IMPORTANCE

**Networking is essential and allows us to go above and beyond to achieve career and individual growth. It is certainly rewarding as it provides the following:**

- Key for career exploration allowing you to gain insight of many aspects of the work and learn other career possibilities.
- Be the first to know about new opportunities
- Use your network to gain feedback to support your professional development

One can leverage networking and be ahead of the game.



# HOW TO NETWORK?

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## Building a Professional Network

To build a successful networking relationship, it is important to first establish your professional goals. Start by assessing your current position and determining your accomplishments, and what you would like to achieve next. Seeking guidance from peers, mentors, professors, or other professionals to help with your goal setting process can be a great first step in developing your network.

When setting goals, it is helpful to consider setting goals that benefit both you and your employer. When starting your career, it is essential to set employability goals, which should align with the goals of the organization's values and mission. This can work to your advantage for promotions and pay raises. Ensure that your goals are actionable, measurable, and realistic, but also be ambitious and challenge yourself to grow. Remember, the purpose of setting goals is to push yourself forward and help you achieve success.



# YOUR PITCH!

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## Craft Your Elevator Pitch

A good elevator pitch works to introduce yourself while starting conversation in networking. Therefore, it is useful to equip yourself with a carefully-crafted elevator pitch. An elevator pitch refers to a concise and compelling self-presentation, usually one minute in length, that serves to introduce yourself and makes a few key points about your experience.



So, how can we create an impactful elevator pitch?



- **Start by introducing yourself:** Begin by offering a strong handshake and providing your full name. Simultaneously, express genuine interest in the other person by inviting them to share a bit about themselves. This initial interaction sets the stage for a positive first impression.
- **Provide a summary of what you do:** Offer a concise overview of your background, focusing on the most relevant aspects of your resume. Include key details such as your educational background, work history, professional interests, and any notable specialties or strengths.
- **Explain what you can do:** Articulate the value you can bring, taking this opportunity to discover ways you can help one another.
- **Practice Pitching:** Find partners with whom you can practice your elevator pitch. Use their feedback to refine your delivery and adapt your pitch to different settings. This rehearsal process ensures that you can confidently articulate your pitch in both formal and informal settings, enhancing your networking effectiveness.



# YOUR COMMUNICATION!

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



Effective communication encompasses both the art of expressing information and the skill of receiving it.

- **Clarity:** Skillfully articulate your ideas and thoughts with clarity and conciseness during the networking conversation. Employing effective verbal communication includes choosing the right words that resonate with the recipient, ensuring a thorough understanding of your message, and adopting a tone that fosters a meaningful response.
- **Active Listening:** Cultivate the habit of listening attentively while engaging in conversation. Actively listening not only appreciates the fundamental values of others but also demonstrates a genuine sense of respect. This involves maintaining eye contact, smiling, nodding, and utilizing other nonverbal cues to convey that the speaker has your full attention.

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The adage “the more the merrier” is especially true with networking. A good place to begin is to develop meaningful relationships with those around you: your peers, alumni, and faculty. Though over time you should seek opportunities to expand and diversify your connections as you develop in your career.



# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Our network is only as strong as the connections we make, and so here are three suggestions to enhance your relationship-building efforts:

- **Be Genuine:** Establish authentic relationships by displaying genuineness and demonstrating sincere interest in others.
- **Follow-up:** Invest a few moments in sending a thank-you email after each conversation. This small gesture not only showcases your professionalism but also leaves a lasting positive impression on your contacts. Personalize your thank-you note by referencing specific topics or takeaways from the discussion that resonated with you or that you plan to explore further.
- **Maintain Long-term Connections:** Stay engaged with your professional network by scheduling periodic coffee chats. These sessions provide an opportunity to share career milestones, discuss personal growth, and strengthen your professional bonds over time.



# NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Being able to attend networking mixers and after-work events would be a significant way to meet new people in your industry, share ideas, and form valuable connections.

With these events being in a more relaxed environment, it makes it easier to start conversations and build strong relationships.

**Some strategies and resources to make the most of networking opportunities would include:**

- Attending Networking Mixers
  - Follow school clubs (like IRHRSA) and U of T's Career Centre to get the dates and times for mixers





## Attending Networking Mixers

- Have an elevator pitch ready that includes a description of what you do, your goals, and what you are passionate about.
  - Focus on the 3 Cs - Confidence, Charisma, and Care!
    - Ensure that your pitch does not sound to rehearsed and still has an organic feel to it.
- Set your goals for the event to know what you want to achieve by attending.
- Research the attendees and speakers to know more about whom to connect with and prepare conversation starters.
- Follow up with people you met by connecting with them on LinkedIn and sending them a personalized message that includes something specific from your conversation to ensure that they remember you.



## Resources to Find Networking Mixers

- Eventbrite: it is a platform that lists various events, including professional networking mixers and workshops that are related to your industry and are near you.
- LinkedIn Events: Aside from connecting with professionals online, it also hosts a feature that allows you to discover in-person and virtual networking events related to your industry.
- Professional Associations: Many industries have professional associations that regularly organize events and mixers for their members, and thus, joining such associations can provide you with valuable networking opportunities and resources.
- Alumni Networks: Alumni groups often host networking events and mixers for alumni at various career stages allowing students and alumni to interact and find new opportunities while learning more about industry experiences and gaining advice.

**eventbrite**

**LinkedIn**



**HR  
PA**

**Human  
Resources  
Professional  
Association**





# VIRTUAL NETWORKING

Although virtual networking can seem daunting at first, it is an essential strategy for individuals who aim to broaden their connections and increase their opportunities in present times. With there being platforms such as LinkedIn, individuals can showcase their backgrounds and skills, and network with other individuals in similar fields. To do this effectively, they can work on the following:

- Optimizing your LinkedIn
- Engaging in Online Discussion through chat groups on LinkedIn or direct messaging people who inspire you

**TIP:** Get familiar with Zoom, Google Meet and Teams. These are the three platforms you would most likely use in coffee chats. Zoom and Teams are set up for all U of T students while Google will require a Gmail.

## Optimizing your LinkedIn



**Having a well-crafted profile would allow you to create a digital resume and have a platform where you can present yourself through your skills and experiences. Some things that a good profile should have include:**

- A professional profile picture
- A headline that states your job title but also includes your passions and expertise, with there being keywords specific to your industry.
- A detailed summary of your professional story, highlighting your goals and achievements.
- Experience and Education in detail
- Skills that are relevant to your industry
- A customized URL that is personalized to your account and makes your profile more memorable.



## Engage in Online Discussion

**Participating in relevant discussions and contributing to online forums will enhance your visibility within your field. To do this effectively, the following things can be done:**

- Follow relevant LinkedIn groups that are relevant to your industry to stay up-to-date on trends and discussions.
- Participate in discussions to provide valuable insights and share your experiences to get noticed.
- Connect with contributors by reaching out to them and sending a connection request. To do this in an effective manner, mention the discussion or what you found valuable in their input.



# NETWORKING ETIQUETTE

Networking etiquette is key and can make or break a coffee chat or a conversation at an event. Knowing the do's before, during and after networking can set you up for success!



## **Read the Room**

Reading the room does not just include looking around to see what is happening around you but instead, listening actively to the conversation and showing genuine interest. That is why it is important to look for people who interest you and doesn't always mean that they have the highest ranking in their organization.

Paying attention to the energy of the person you speak with is also important, mirror the energy and if not go beyond it. Be enthusiastic, and remind yourself that you are getting access to someone who has the knowledge they can impart to you. These opportunities can sometimes be few, so take the time to engage meaningfully.

## **Use respectful language**

Be mindful of the language you use. Whether it be pronouns or word choice, use language that is respectful to the person you are speaking with. Swearing and inappropriate words should be avoided.

## **Remember names**

Nothing is worse than when you call someone by the wrong name. Take the time to remember it. In-person you can repeat their name to confirm that you are saying it correctly and have the right name. Saying the person's name can also show respect to the person, and they will appreciate that detail.

## **Thank you.**

Always thank those you are speaking to for their time. Whether personal or work commitments, people have busy schedules and networking takes time. Take a moment to appreciate the individual for showing up and being present. Time is a gift, be thankful for it.

### **Craft thoughtful questions.**

Prepare thoughtful questions beforehand. Take a look at their LinkedIn to better understand who they are and their journey. Avoid cliches like asking about company culture and what they do. If the question's answer can be found online, avoid it. Questions should also not be invasive. Do not

### **Treat networking like a learning opportunity, not a job opportunity.**

Sometimes, networking is seen as a transactional action, an interaction that leads to a job. Instead, networking is a way to get in touch with others and learn about who they are, their journey and what they do. Avoid asking for jobs or a reference, instead focus on leaving with knowledge.

### **Dress Professionally**

It takes less than a second or a person to make a first impression upon meeting you. Recognize that and take advantage of it. Dress professionally whenever engaging in networking interactions. Consider wearing turtlenecks over t-shirts and dress shirts instead of hoodies.

# COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

## **Online Message Template:**

This message template can be used on LinkedIn or email. It is important to make these messages specific to each person. Look at their experience. Something as simple as a career change or a degree can be what you refer to in your message. Be curious, and analyze their LinkedIn page, articles they may have published or podcasts they were on.

Hi [insert name],

I hope you are well.

My name is [insert your name] and I am a student at the University of Toronto studying Industrial Relations and Human Resources/Work and Organizations/CHRM. I am messaging you because I noticed that you are currently a [insert their position and company or if they are a graduate from the program acknowledge that to create a personal link] and have experience/knowledge in [insert the field you are interested in].

I was wondering if it would be possible to schedule a coffee chat with you to discuss [insert what you want to chat about]

Thank you for your time!

Best,  
[insert your name]

# BUT HOW DO I GET IN CONTACT?

After you have done your research and prepared your communication, how do you get in touch?

If they are your professor, consider going to their office hour to chat and ask for a coffee chat to discuss their work and their experience.

If they are a coworker, let them know in person or message them directly.

If it is someone you do not know personally, message them on LinkedIn. You can do this by editing your invite and creating a 200-character personalized invite message. In cases like this, consider introducing yourself briefly, mentioning a similarity (you are both IRHR students or both have an interest in talent acquisition) and close off with why you are connecting.

Avoid Facebook, Instagram, or any other form of informal social media. Unless they are at U of T or in your workplace, avoid messaging their emails. Instead, respect their privacy and message them through LinkedIn.



# CONTACT US

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The best way to contact  
IRHRSA is:

Email: [uoft.irhrsa@gmail.com](mailto:uoft.irhrsa@gmail.com)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/irhrsaUofT/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/uoft.irhrsa/?hl=en>

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