

Notre Dame MBA Networking Guide

Fall 2019



For Notre Dame MBAs, networking is a term that is used frequently during and after their time at Notre Dame. Networking is exciting for some and terrifying for others. One thing most MBAs agree on is that networking is a skill that can and should be mastered in order to receive the full benefit the Notre Dame network has to offer.

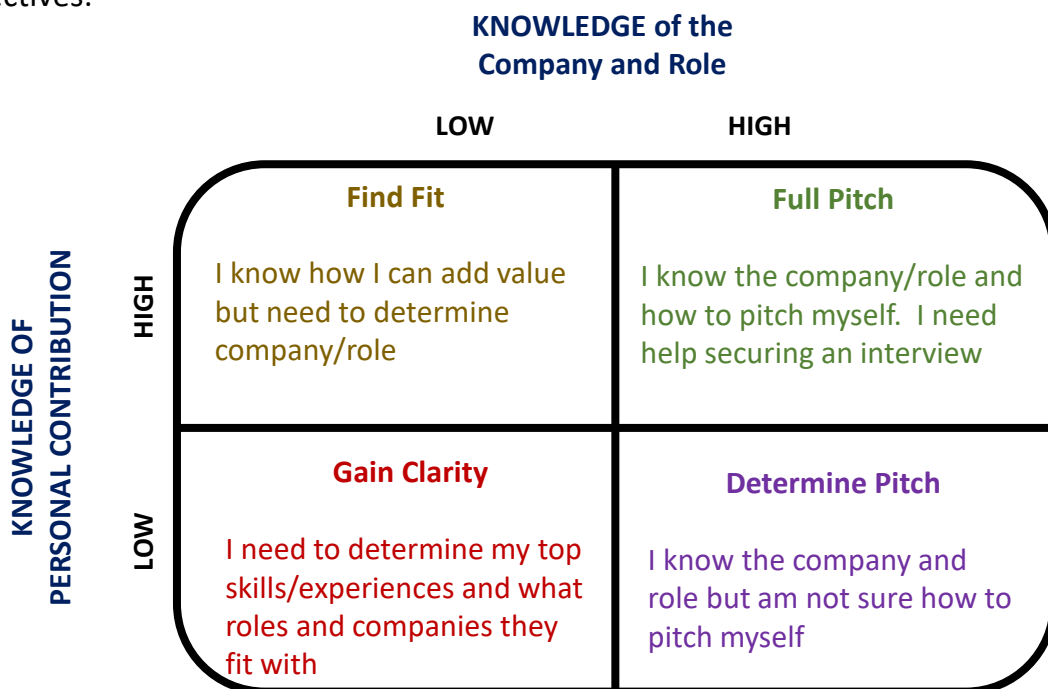
Numerous definitions and types of networking fill scores of books and workshops. Networking can range from purely social to narrowly targeted. In this guide, we discuss how MBAs use networking during their career development to secure an internship or full-time job. Therefore we use the following definition of networking:

Networking (netwərkiNG) *noun*: The skill and process of asking people for information, advice, ideas, and support as you pursue your career goals.

Networking can occur in person or virtually. This guide will focus on virtual networking since this is most common for MBAs.

Virtual Networking (Email/Phone/Web conference)

Having a clear objective for your networking is the first step. This will determine your strategy. Your networking objectives will be largely influenced by two key factors: 1) your knowledge of your most marketable skills and experiences (personal contribution) and 2) your knowledge of the company and role you are targeting. The diagram below illustrates how these two factors will determine your networking objectives:



To summarize the key objectives of these quadrants:

- **Gain Clarity:** Networking to help identify your top skills and experiences, and what companies/roles provide the opportunity for best fit with these skills and experiences
- **Find Fit:** You know your key skills and experiences but are not sure they are a fit for a given company and/or role.
- **Determine Pitch:** Networking when you know the role and the company you want to target but are not sure how to best pitch yourself to the company
- **Give Pitch:** You know the company and role and know you are a good fit

Now let's explore each of these 4 strategies in more detail...

Gain Clarity

Objective: Identify what skills and experiences you have and what roles and companies would be a good fit

Example: You came to an MBA program to pivot to a new industry and function. You are open to different opportunities but you need help identifying what skills and experiences would be most desirable to companies and what roles and companies may make sense

Approach: Take a broad approach to reaching out to alumni that work in popular functions like finance, consulting, marketing. Do some homework on the company and person before you reach out.

Sample Email:

Subject: Notre Dame MBA student seeking your advice

Dear John, *(Avoid Hi – you can never go wrong with Dear Mr./Ms.)*

My name is Desmond Waters and I am a 2020 Notre Dame MBA and found your information in the alumni database. May I have 20 minutes to speak with you about your career path and what it takes to be successful in marketing within the tech sector?

For the past three years I've worked as a marketing coordinator for a non-profit in Boston. As I look to pivot after graduation, your insights would be very helpful.

Thanks for your time,
Desmond Waters

Find Fit

Objective: Identify companies and roles that would best leverage your skills and experiences.

Example: You know your core skills are analyzing data and communicating customer requirements. You also know your sales experience is valuable but you are not sure what MBA level roles and companies would best leverage this set of skills.

Approach: Reach out to companies across several different industries and functions. Network with alumni with one to three years of experience that are working in roles that seem interesting to you.

Sample Email: Subject: Notre Dame MBA student seeking your advice
Dear John,

My name is JP Revel and I am a 2021 Notre Dame MBA with a background in consumer sales. I am looking to learn more about roles that will best leverage my strong analytical skills and sales experience.

(Add a comment personalizing your note as to why you are reaching out to them; make a personal and/or professional connection about what drew you to contact them in the first place).
If you are willing, I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you for 15-20 minutes to learn more about your current role and your experience at your company. *(Be sure to tailor this appropriately to the person's specific role/company)*

Sincerely,
JP Revel

Determine Pitch

Objective: Determine how to best position yourself for a desired company and role

Example: You know you want to go into consulting and KPMG looks like a good fit. You have a background in corporate finance but are not sure how to best sell yourself to KPMG.

Approach: Take a targeted approach and reach out to companies and roles you know you want to apply to. Ideally, reach out to alumni with at least several years of experience who are more likely to have insight into hiring at the company. If you can connect with alumni that have a similar background to you, that much better.

Sample Email:

Subject: Notre Dame MBA student seeking your input about KPMG

Dear John,

My name is Steve Phelps and I am a 2020 Notre Dame MBA candidate pursuing opportunities in consulting. For the past three years, I worked in an FP&A role with ConAgra Foods. My strong finance skills and ability to work in cross-functional teams make me a good fit for an advisory internship role.

May I have 15-20 minutes to speak with you to learn more about your experience at KPMG and what KPMG looks for in exceptional advisory candidates? I recognize this may be a busy time for you, so if we are unable to connect via email, I'll try to reach you next week to see whether that is more convenient. *(if you use this specific approach as recommended by Dalton in ch. 6 of the 2-Hour Job Search, it is critical that you calendar reminders for yourself and follow-up as promised or you will hurt the perception you create)*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Steve Phelps

Full Pitch

Objective: Determine the best path to get an interview

Example: You know that you want to obtain a role in Product Management for Cisco. You know how to address the requirements of the job description and your skills and experience are a strong match for the position.

Approach: Take a targeted approach and reach out to alumni or university relations contacts (in instances where they have expressed a willingness to be contacted by students) that may have an ability to influence interviews.

Sample Email:

Subject: Notre Dame MBA student seeking your input about Cisco product management

Dear John,

My name is Mary Jones and I am a 2020 Notre Dame MBA candidate pursuing opportunities in product management. For the past three years, I worked in a product development role with X.

My passion for product development, leading cross-functional teams, and contributing to a company with a culture of innovation has led me to look closely at an open product management opportunity within Cisco.

Would you be open to spending to spend 15-20 minutes via phone to share your perspective on the product management function within Cisco and any advice you may have for how to best position myself for consideration?

Sincerely,

Mary Jones

Summary Tips on Writing an Effective Networking Email

- **BRIEF:** 100 words or fewer
- **Human:** Lead with your connection
- **SUBTLE:** Request advice & insight, *not* job assistance
- **DIRECT:** Ask a question, be clear on the call to action
- **EGOLESS:** Customize/focus your message on the receiver as much as possible

CLEARLY DEFINED, NARROWLY & BROADLY: Company, General Industry, and Location

The following are the most useful tools students use for career networking



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is built to leverage strong university networks like Notre Dame. It is fairly easy to identify alumni by role, company, and city. Notre Dame has two groups:

- University of Notre Dame – this includes all colleges and degrees – 95K+ members
- Mendoza College of Business – this is for Mendoza undergrads and grad students - 19K+ members. We recommend you start with this one.

Quick Tip: Start your search by going to the Mendoza College page, then click Alumni on the left side of the page, then search by city, company, function, and skills. (Pro tip: if you are having difficulty locating an alumni currently at a target company, you can search on prior places of employment to expand your reach.)



MyNotreDame

This is the official Notre Dame alumni online directory. You can search alumni by degree, city, industry, company and other areas. Unlike LinkedIn, each contact usually includes a personal or business email.

Quick Tip: You will likely find better success emailing alumni directly versus using LinkedIn messaging. Many students identify contacts on LinkedIn and then search by name on this site to get an email. **Hunter.io** is another 3rd party site that can be used to help find emails.



Irish Compass

This is Notre Dame's Official online community dedicated to careers and networking. The site includes over 39 industry groups such as Consulting, I-Banking, and Consumer Packaged Goods for instance. The site includes a mentor program and a job board.

Quick Tip: MBA students find value in joining industry groups that match with MBA career paths such as Consulting and Financial Services

So you've landed a call. Great! What can you do to ensure it goes as well as possible?

In Chapter 9 of Dalton's 2 Hour Job Search, he details suggestions for enabling good conversations. We highly recommend you read it and apply it to your specific conversations.

To summarize this framework, you'll want to follow this general structure for your conversations:

- 1) Appropriate small-talk to build rapport
- 2) Questions and Answers using the "TIARA" framework, which stands for:
 - Trends
 - Insights
 - Advice
 - Resources
 - Assignments
- 3) Next Steps

Networking FAQs

Q: How quickly can I send a follow-up email if I have not heard from them?

A: We suggest you send a follow-up email one week after the first email. Send a third email after one more week. Do not send a fourth email. (*Review chapter 7 in Dalton's 2-Hour Job Search for further detail.*)

Q: What job level should I target for my initial contact?

A: This depends on the objective of the networking email.

Q: What if there are no alumni in my functional area?

A: Ideally you will find a contact in your functional area, but if not, it is fine to reach out to alumni in other functional areas. For example, if you can not find a finance contact, reach out to a marketing contact.

Q: I had the call but the contact did not really offer any next steps. What should I do?

A: This is a tough one. You did great work to contact an alumnus and had a phone conversation but it did not go anywhere after the call. This happens and it's important not to take this personally. Reach out to another contact. Dalton offers additional guidance in chapter 5 regarding how to "naturalize" additional contacts.

Q: Is it OK, to send an email via the LinkedIn connection function?

A: Ideally you will find a contact on LinkedIn and then find their email via MyNotreDame or Hunter.io, for instance. If you can not find their email, you can certainly use LinkedIn's messaging function keeping in mind your response rates are likely to be lower.

Summary Quick Tips to Keep in Mind for Successful Networking

- **Always follow-up** – use a calendar tool and follow Dalton’s suggestions as appropriate for contacts – be sure you do what you say you will do. (Also, it’s important if you reply to your original email to follow-up, that you don’t simply say “see below...” but rather, write a polite reiteration of your request.)
- **Remember names** – find a tracking system that works for you.
- **Provide openers** that make it easy for others to enter into conversation with you.
- **Be a good listener** and show genuine interest in what the person has to say.
- **Stay in the moment** during the conversation and look for areas of mutual interest – the most important thing you can do is **build good rapport**.
- **Be respectful of the time** communicated and only take the time allotted for conversations (unless the other party volunteers to go longer). Don’t schedule a meeting immediately following your call in the event you are on a roll and they offer to go long. Similarly, it’s best to give yourself a little space prior to your call so that you can be of clear mind for your conversation.
- **Adapt to their schedule** and don’t reschedule unless it’s an emergency. If the conversation is going well, and you are establishing good rapport, don’t be afraid to ask for assistance as appropriate (e.g., openness to a follow-up call, other people with whom they may suggest you speak, accepting offers to refer you). Generally speaking, be very cautious about asking for a referral on the first call unless the conversation is organically going there and it is clear that solid rapport has been made.
- **Keep contacts updated** on your progress – stay in touch, especially those who have referred you.
- **Offer to help** others with whom you are networking in anyway you can.
- **Use all your networks**, not just ND.