



# Notre Dame MBA Networking Guide

Graduate Business Career Development

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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.

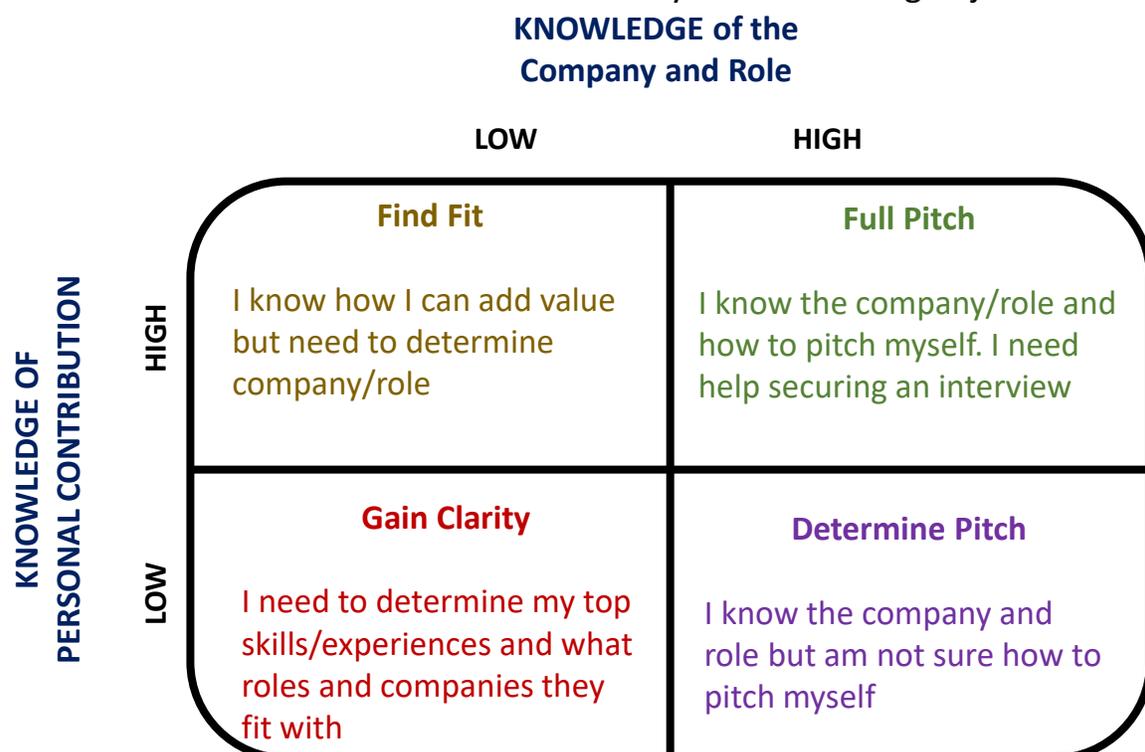
Numerous definitions and types of networking fill scores of books and workshops. Networking can range from purely social to narrowly targeted. In this guide, we discuss how MBAs use networking during their career development to secure an internship or full-time job. Therefore we use the following definition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

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

Networking is a two-way street that is about creating a mutual benefit that provides value to each person. 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

*John, (use first name as opposed to Mr. or Mrs. since you want them to see you as potential future colleague)*

I am a 2022 Notre Dame MBA and found your information in the alumni database. May I have 15-20 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 consideration,  
Desmond Waters

**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

Jane,

I am a 2022 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

John,

I am a 2021 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

Jane,

I am a 2022 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
- **Tailor:** These sample notes are just that, SAMPLES with different options you might use. You need to exercise good judgment and adapt these approaches/customize your notes appropriately for the circumstances so they aren't cookie cutter.
- **Collegial:** Address them by first name (not Mr. or Mrs.) as you want to be viewed as a potential colleague
- **Human:** Lead with your connection, be polite and respectful of their time
- **Subtle:** Request advice & insight, *not* direct hiring 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 and broadly):** Company, General Industry, and Location

## Key Networking Systems Tools to Support Your 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. (Additional 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. We recommend identifying contacts on LinkedIn and then searching by name on this site to get an email. If you can't locate the email here, check the next 3 sites below if/as necessary.



### 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



### CareerShift

This is a very powerful subscription service that you have access to through ND which, in addition to very comprehensive job search functionality (Indeed is a mere subset of the sites integrated into CareerShift), also includes extensive email/contact information that the site has curated from advanced spider crawling technology.

### Hunter.io



Hunter.io is a free site that can identify emails, or at least most likely patterns, for almost any domain. If you are unable to find an email via the three sites above, grab yourself a free account here at Hunter.io and you will almost certainly be able to locate the email you are looking for.

## 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.

The best way to learn is to get out there and just do it. You can also practice with a classmate and/or career coach if necessary, but nothing replaces just getting out there and having real networking conversations.

The more you work at it and practice, the more comfortable it will become.

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: I'm new at networking and worry that I will be a nuisance and impose on other people's time. How should I handle this?**

A: The first thing to keep in mind is that most people genuinely want to help, especially in the ND network. In fact, some companies even offer financial incentives for employees who refer in good talent to the company. For those who don't want to help or don't have the time, they won't respond or they will be very guarded with their time. Dalton talks about these different personas in detail in his book. It's normal and not something you should take personally. The best medicine is to just get out there and practice having these networking conversations. The more you do it, the more comfortable you will become. In fact, you may even come to enjoy it.

**Q: How soon should 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. Typically, if you haven't heard from them after two attempts, it's time to move on to another contact. You may send a third email after one more week as a maximum number of attempts. *(Review chapter 7 in Dalton's 2-Hour Job Search for additional suggestions.)*

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

A: This depends on the objective of the networking email. You may tend to find that more recent alumni may be more responsive because they have a more recent memory of what it's like to be in your shoes. But there may also be times when it's appropriate to connect with more experienced alumni depending upon your objectives, alumni presence at a particular company, and/or specified mentor interests in Irish Compass.

**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. You can also consider other allies in your network (e.g., alumni from your undergraduate program, former co-workers, family/friends).

**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 a message via the LinkedIn connection function?**

A: Ideally you will find a contact on LinkedIn and then find their email via Alumni and Friends on MyNotreDame, Irish Compass, Career Shift, or Hunter.io. If you cannot find their email, you can certainly use LinkedIn's messaging function keeping in mind your response rates are likely to be lower. Incidentally, **we do NOT recommend purchasing LinkedIn Premium Services; you can accomplish everything you need without paying for these features.**

## Summary Quick Tips to Keep in Mind for Successful Networking

- **Always follow-up** – use a calendar tool and/or the snooze function on Gmail to set predetermined times to remind yourself to follow-up. Use Dalton’s follow-up 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 (e.g., DOME, Google Sheets, Excel).
- **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 sure to be on time and 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.
- **Send a Thank You Note** – email a timely thank you note (within 24 hours) of speaking and politely recapping any next steps if/as applicable. For bonus points, also mail a personalized, hand-written note. You can pick up a Notre Dame postcard from the Career Development Office if you like.
- **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 Notre Dame.