

Networking for researchers

Jean-luc Doumont

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As researchers, we are told we should engage in networking, just like we should exercise more or eat better, the argument being that it is critical for a successful career in the long term. Still, what is networking all about? When and how to network? Below are the main messages from my corresponding lecture. Hopefully, they will help demystify networking—an activity you in fact already engage in, whether you realize it or not.

What a network is

Networking is about hidden opportunities

Networking is about finding people, eliciting goodwill, gaining visibility
Building one's network is a long-term endeavor
Networking is largely about reciprocation

Conversations

Manage the chat from start to end

To start a conversation, identify a common point
Show interest in other people: ask questions, listen actively
Put yourself in the picture in due time: don't rush in
If you want something, state what you want
Close in a positive way, perhaps with an action

Respect is not in what you say—it's in the way you say it

Show that you are mindful of what other people value
Be sincere Avoid flattery
Be yourself Don't pretend to be someone you are not

Reciprocation

A network is a social construction: it is largely about sharing

Knowledge	Share your expertise
Skills	Get involved: volunteer
Attitude	Reciprocate favors

Conferences

Go ahead and meet new people

Plan	Identify ahead of time the people you wish to meet
Split	Don't stay with the group of colleagues you already know
Invite	Be available for a chat, wear your name badge visibly
Advertise	Tell people about your upcoming talk or poster
Follow up	Do something about interested contacts

Research talks

Maximize the visibility a research talk affords

- Provide value in the talk and engage the audience
- Consider giving a handout or other form of memento
- Be available for questions afterwards during a break

Poster sessions

Be active during poster sessions

- Attract passersby to your poster (“pick-up lines”, body language)
- Give a two-minute version first, then elaborate—if appropriate
- Be aware of everyone: include newcomers in the discussion
- Ask questions, listen actively: it's a conversation, not a talk
- Give a printout of your poster with your contact information

The virtual world

Remote communication is less straightforward

- We risk losing...
- The situation which means a common point with others
- Faces to recognize people, but also to read expressions
- Names what to call others, what others should call you

E-mail / messages

When writing to people, provide reference points

- Tell/remind people how you know them
- Choose which address you send e-mail from
- Sign in the way you prefer addressees to address you

Online networks

Include enough for credibility, but beware of long lists

- Choose how to write your name: it's networking, not paperwork
- Include a profile photograph: consider what it says of you
- Keep information current, including your location