

# Nametags, Handshakes, and Cocktails: Overcoming Cultural Barriers to Networking

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## Suggested Reading

1. Networking Events:
  - a. Harvard Business Review: Breaking Into a Conversation Gracefully  
<https://hbr.org/2010/03/breaking-into-a-conversation-g-2>
  - b. Forbes: 17 Tips to Survive your Next Networking Event  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/yec/2014/07/22/17-tips-to-survive-your-next-networking-event/#6647fa027cd4>
  - c. ABA: Networking Tips for Young Lawyers  
<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/committees/solo-small-firm/articles/2017/8-networking-tips-young-lawyers.html>
  - d. Guy Kawasaki: The Art of Schmoozing [https://guykawasaki.com/the\\_art\\_of\\_schm-2/](https://guykawasaki.com/the_art_of_schm-2/)
2. Informational Interviewing:
  - a. Legal Authority: A Guide to Networking Meetings  
<http://www.legalauthority.com/articles/70028/A-guide-to-networking-meetings>
  - b. ABA: How to Succeed and Have Fun at Informational Interviews  
<https://abaforlawstudents.com/2018/01/01/how-to-succeed-and-have-fun-at-informational-interviews/>
  - c. Vault: Ten Steps to Effective Informational Interviewing <http://www.vault.com/blog/vaults-law-blog-legal-careers-and-industry-news/ten-steps-to-effective-informational-interviewing/>
3. Cultural Concerns:
  - a. EEOC: Best Practices For Eradicating Religious Discrimination in the Workplace  
[https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/best\\_practices\\_religion.html](https://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/best_practices_religion.html)
  - b. EEOC: Religious Garb and Grooming in the Workplace: Rights and Responsibilities  
[https://www1.eeoc.gov//eeoc/publications/qa\\_religious\\_garb\\_grooming.cfm?renderforprint=1](https://www1.eeoc.gov//eeoc/publications/qa_religious_garb_grooming.cfm?renderforprint=1)
  - c. Chabad: May I Shake a Lady's Hand?  
[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1051760/jewish/May-I-Shake-the-Ladys-H](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1051760/jewish/May-I-Shake-the-Ladys-H)
  - d. Harvard Business Review: The Upside of Disclosing your Religion at Work  
<https://hbr.org/2018/03/research-the-upsides-of-disclosing-your-religion-sexual-orientation-or-parental-status-at-work>

## 10 Tips for Networking Events

1. **Identify Goals Prior to the Event**
  - a. What do I want to learn from the people I meet at this event?
  - b. What do I want people to know about me?
  - c. How many people will I aim to meet to encourage me to network at this event?
2. **Be Approachable**
  - a. Maintain open body language
  - b. Smile
  - c. Make eye contact
  - d. Don't stare at your phone or be a wallflower
3. **Entering a Conversation**
  - a. Look at the group's body language
  - b. Ask if you may join the group
  - c. Introduce yourself and extend your hand
  - d. Have a friend or an acquaintance make an introduction
4. **Approach Individuals in Pairs Not in Groups**
  - a. Meet individuals by yourself or with a buddy
  - b. Avoid approaching individuals with a group
5. **Conversation Dos and Don'ts**
  - a. Do
    - i. Be a good listener
    - ii. Be prepared with discussion topics
    - iii. Ask thoughtful questions
    - iv. Be present and engaged in the conversation
  - b. Don't
    - i. Overstay your welcome
    - ii. Discuss politics, race or religion
    - iii. Look for the next person you want to meet
    - iv. Dominate the conversation
6. **Elevator Pitch**
  - a. Keep it brief (1 minute or less)
  - b. Who, What and Where
    - i. Who: You-mention your interests, skills and experience
    - ii. What: The type of position you are seeking
    - iii. Where: The location and type of employer
7. **Exiting a Conversation**
  - a. Thank the individual for their time
  - b. Excuse yourself from the conversation
  - c. Shake hands and ask for a business card
8. **It's Quality Not Quantity**
  - a. Focus on the quality of conversations not the number of people you meet
9. **Cultural Considerations**
  - a. Firm handshake
  - b. Arrive Timely (Not too late, not to early)
  - c. Eye Contact
10. **Staying in Contact**
  - a. Reach out for coffee or lunch
  - b. Keep contact updated on your job search
  - c. Forward information (articles, etc.) that are of interest to the contact

## NETWORKING TIPS *(Annotated)*

Networking and informational interviewing are integral parts of the job search, and important life-long skills for attorneys. A significant number of graduates each year report that they received their job offer through a friend, referral, or other form of networking. Even those who secure jobs through an on-campus interview or job listing report that networking helped them in their job search, as they gained contacts, references, and information about the legal market.

### What it is:

A life-long connection-building process. The networking process has a long-term, rather than an immediate, payoff. The easiest example of your network is your current classmates. The friends you make in your class today will be leaders in law firms, corporations, governments and non-governmental organizations in the future and will be invaluable contacts to you as you seek alliances with attorneys in particular practices around the world.

### How to do it:

Think of all of the **people you already know** who might be able to develop your network:

- classmates (from law school and prior schools)
- professors (JD/LLM and undergrad, if applicable)
- former employers (even non-legal)
- alumni of your undergraduate and law schools
- other practitioners in your practice area
- practitioners from your home country/region
- family, friends, etc.

Reach out to these contacts regularly (as appropriate – don't be a Spammer!). Let them know what you are up to at NYU or elsewhere. Ask them questions about their practice or recent news that might be of interest to both of you. Ask for advice whenever possible – the goal of building a network is to educate yourself not only about potential job opportunities but also about legal practice more broadly. Many people appreciate being given the opportunity to talk about themselves and their practice, so it is always a good idea to show a genuine interest in someone's background.

### Informational Interviewing:

Informational interviews give law students an opportunity to speak with practitioners one-on-one, learn more about the legal market, practice, and potential career opportunities. At the same time, you have the opportunity to present your background and interests to a potential employer and impress him/her with your poise and intelligence without the pressure of a "real" interview.

- In addition to conducting informational interviews with attorneys that you meet at events, or people with whom you already have a connection, you can use lawyer search engines such as [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) and [LinkedIn.com](http://LinkedIn.com) to identify attorneys with whom you have a common interest (e.g., a similar practice area, the same law school, similar language skills, or country of first law degree) and write to them asking for advice and information.
- Make it clear in the first correspondence that you are **seeking advice** and not asking for a job. This takes the pressure off the attorney, and makes it easier for her to agree to a brief conversation (see sample talking points below).
- Be **flexible with timing** – remember they are doing you a favor by meeting with you.
- If possible, at the end of your informational interview, **ask if there are any other attorneys you should talk to**, or any organizations you should join to help you in your career development.
- Remember, the best way to start an email to a new contact is to "name drop." People will respond positively to an opening sentence like: "I recently met Mr. XYZ, and he suggested I contact you to learn more about your career in International Trade Law."

**Commented [SC1]:** First generation and international students may not have anyone in this category, or may think they don't have anyone in this category. Address this directly in information sessions and workshops. Encourage the development of a classmate network to start – peer support is essential to law school success, so this is a way to ease into networking. Upperclass students (in the case of JDs) can be an especially powerful network for first generation students, and they should be encouraged to tap into student groups and other campus resources to start building a network at school.

**Commented [SC2]:** Many students may be uncomfortable reaching out to a professor, partner or even a family member. Cultural differences may mean that such an outreach appears rude or inconsiderate to some students. When possible, invite faculty and/or senior alumni to present at networking workshops with you to demonstrate their willingness to participate in such conversations. Provide students with a name of someone to try their first networking conversation with. Match LLMs with JDs for practice.

**Commented [SC3]:** Emphasize that this is common in legal circles. Also prepare students for rejection (or more commonly, unresponsive attorneys). An unresponsive attorney doesn't mean the student did something wrong, it means the attorney is busy. Also, an unanswered networking email should not preclude the student from applying to that employer at some point in the future.

**Try to make it easy for the person to help you.** Instead of asking “how can I get a job?” ask a targeted question, one that might provide you with information about the career path for a lawyer in your area, as well as advice on the job search. Following are some sample questions that can be asked during an informational interview.

#### *Career Path*

- Where did you work immediately after graduating from NYU?
- What was your career path (if you’ve changed jobs since graduation)?
- How/why did you choose your current employer?

#### *Practice Area*

- How did you choose this practice area?
- What is a “typical” day in the life of a practitioner in your area?
- What does a first or second year associate do in your practice?
- In your opinion, what is the most interesting/exciting/rewarding aspect of your practice?
- How does a student who is interested in this area get started?
- What courses would you recommend a student take next semester to pursue a career in this field? Are there any courses you wish you had taken when you were at NYU?
- Are there any professional associations/organizations a student should join to gain exposure to this area?
- What are the lead publications in this field? Any websites or other sources a student should read regularly?

#### *Organization*

- Are associates at your organization given any specialized training?
- How is work assigned?
- How do the various departments of your firm work together?
- How does your organization recruit/hire 1L/2L/3L/LLM students?
- For organizations with offices in other cities, what are the options for geographic mobility?

#### *Job Search Strategies*

- How did you find your job?
- What other job search methods do you find effective (as an employer)?
- What are some common interviewing tips for law students?
- What qualities/qualifications does your firm look for in a candidate?
- Do you recommend that students prepare a writing sample? What type of material is preferred?
- How do you view academic performance? What about prior work experience?

**Commented [SC4]:** In addition to reviewing networking correspondence, offer mock informational interview conversations to help students prepare fully for reaching out to a stranger.

## Sample Networking Log

Contact Name	Where do they work?	Alum?	Where did we meet?	Follow Up	Other Notes
Camille Counselor	Awesome Corporation (City)	Yes (LL.M. Class of 2010)	LL.M. Alumni Reception (2/18)	Sent "nice-to-meet-you" note on 2/5/18	Huge soccer fan; kids are starting high school
José Lawyer	ABC Law Firm (City)	No (J.D. from Other School)	CLE event at the Bar Association (3/18)	Sent "nice-to-meet-you" note on 3/7/18; meeting for coffee in 2 weeks	Originally from Brazil; specializes in privacy law

### Sample Follow-up Correspondence:

#### Immediately after Event

*To be used after meeting a new potential contact. Send within 24 hours.*

Dear Camille,

It was a pleasure to meet you last night at the Alumni Reception. I really enjoyed discussing the Local Soccer Team. I would love to hear more about the work you do at Awesome Corporation; would it be possible to come buy you a cup of coffee near your office next week?

Thank you,

Sara Student

#### Offer/Ask/Update

##### Offer:

*To be used at any time in the relationship. Other offers include upcoming events, an interesting case you discussed in class, or recognition of the contact in a local publication or award.*

Dear José,

I hope that you are well. I read this great blog post on the privacy rights of cats – I immediately thought of you. <http://catshaveprivacy.com/> Hope this is helpful!

Best,

Johanna Scholar

Ask:

*To be used after cultivating the relationship. Other asks include resume review, advice on classes to take, review target list of employers for additions/suggestions.*

Dear Camille,

I hope that you are well and that your kids are settling into high school. I have an interview next week with Not-as-awesome Corporation. Are you familiar with this Corporation? Do you have any tips or advice for the interview? Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Sara Student

Update:

*One of the easiest touches for students. There are many built in update points in the school year – finishing first semester, graduation, taking the bar, etc.*

Dear José,

I hope all is well with you and you enjoyed your trip to Brazil. I wanted to let you know that I just finished my first semester! Can't believe it! You were so helpful when we met before, I wanted to keep in touch.

Thank you,

Johanna Scholar

NYU Law - Alumni Profiling Project:

In order to help some students ease into informational interviewing, we created an alumni profiling project. Students sign up with the Office of Career Services, indicating their geographic and practice area preferences. The OCS then researches and identifies one or two attorneys that generally fit the profile (sometimes this is easier than others!) and sends that match to the students. In some cases, the alum is known to the OCS as a “Friendly” alum and in others it was a random alum found through research.

Dear [Student]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our alumni profiling project. You have been assigned to profile: [XXX]

We look forward to getting your responses, which will be incorporated into our annual LL.M. Job Search Resources Handbook. This project is designed to give you a chance to speak with an established alumnus/a and hopefully develop a relationship that could be useful as you progress in your career. Please remember that you are not just representing yourself, but are also representing NYU School of Law, and we remind you to exercise the highest levels of professionalism and courtesy in your interactions with these alumni. Please cc me on your initial communication with the alumnus/a. Please remember to send a thank you note after you have met with the alumnus/a.

In the course of your conversation with the alumnus/a, you should gather enough information to answer the three questions below, but you are welcome to ask other questions as well (as relevant to their practice or your interests). See the attached informational interviewing tip sheet and articles on networking for additional suggestions of questions to ask.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year of Graduation from NYU:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employer:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Degree from NYU:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Where did you work immediately after graduating from NYU?**

**2. Your career path to date?**

**3. Advice for current students?**

**4. Is it ok for current students to contact you for career advice?** (this will not be public, but will be on file in the career office).

See below for a sample introductory email to your assigned alumnus/a explaining the project and asking for time to meet with him/her at their convenience.

Re: NYU LL.M. Alumni Profile Project

Dear Ms./Mr. X:

I was given your name by NYU School of Law’s Office of Career Services, as part of a new project to profile successful LL.M. alumni. The profiles generated through this project will be featured in the school’s LL.M. Career Handbook. I am a current LL.M. student in the XXX program, and I was assigned to profile you, as we share a similar background in XXX. I would be very interested in speaking with you briefly to discuss your career path since completing the LL.M. and to hear your advice for current students. I can come to your offices at your convenience, or we can set up a time to speak over the phone. I understand that you are very busy, and I can certainly work around your schedule to pick the best time to meet. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,