

Career Networking

Finding People You Can Learn From

What is (and what is not) career networking?

When asked about the primary source of information that led to their first job after CEU, 70-80% of CEU graduates mention their networks. Whether they specify former colleagues, current professors, family members or people they met at conferences or in a professional association, networking proves to be a particularly important tool for career development.

Career networking ...

- is an information exchange between you and another person and is ideally mutually beneficial; and
- involves establishing relationships with personal or professional contacts or members of your family who can provide assistance or information regarding your job search, achieving your professional goals or learning about specific fields.

... it is not

- pressure to attend numerous conferences and events in the hope of making a few tentative connections without a specific aim in mind;
- self-promotion or pretending to be someone you are not;
- a competition to see who can collect the most business cards or connections on LinkedIn, Twitter followers or FB friends.

Cultivate your network actively, to ensure you have connections in relevant professional and geographical areas that you can turn to when necessary.

Why reach out to connections?

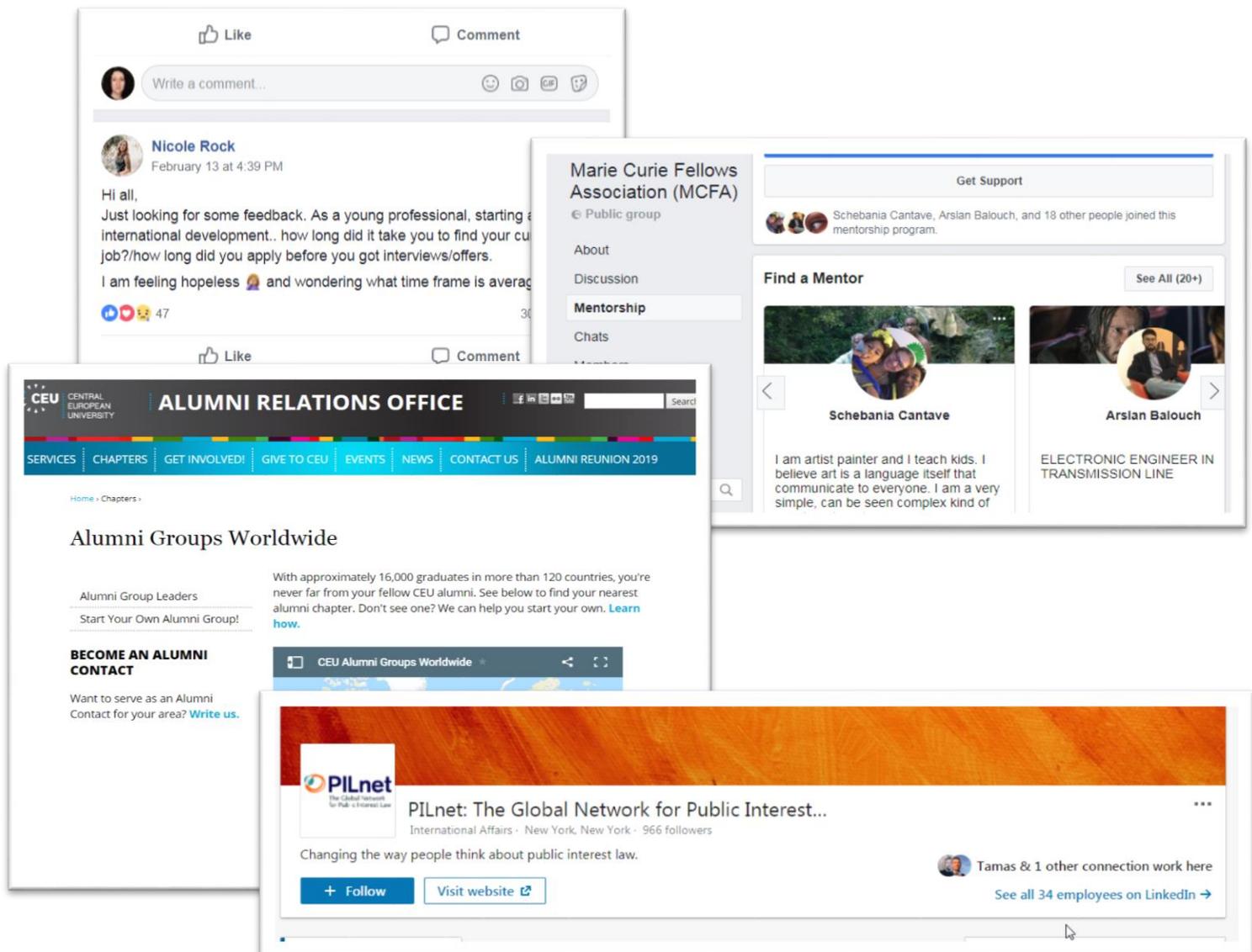
The information you collect when reaching out to your network can include:

- facts and tips about your professional or academic **field of interest**, a particular employer organization or the job market in a geographical area;
- **information** you need for projects or research, like papers, articles, etc.;
- specific **advice** on job search in a specific area;
- tips on your job-hunting **tools** (CV, resume) and **practices**;
- **names of other people to contact** now or later as you conduct career research, seek insights into a particular application process or look for **referrals** to professionals in a particular organization.

Who constitutes your career network?

- **Faculty** and **supervisors**
- **Family** and **friends**
- **Student organizations** or **study groups**
- **Employers** met during CEU "Careers in..." sessions or other career events
- **Alumni** serving as speakers at panel discussion or networking events
- Speakers, **conference organizers**

- Members of **Professional associations** in your area of interest
- **CEU alumni chapters** (alumni.ceu.edu/alumni-groups-worldwide);
- Formal/informal **professional groups on Facebook**, where members ask for or share advice (some include mentorship features)
- LinkedIn: **CEU alumni on LinkedIn** (<https://www.linkedin.com/school/central-european-university/people/>), a great source of information regarding where CEU alumni are, including location, employer, sector, education major, skills
- LinkedIn: **employees** in your organizations of interest
- and any other person you meet and with whom you have an engaging conversation about your career endeavors



Networking etiquette

When reaching out to connections, make reasonable requests that:

- are feasible for the other person;
- don't take an unreasonable amount of time/energy;
- are appropriate and sensible.

In most cases you will reach out to your connections via email or on social and professional media. It is important to be clear and concise, yet still include enough information for them to be able to decide whether or not they can help. As the other person might not know who you are (for instance, when you reach out to an alum who left CEU before you enrolled), make sure you introduce yourself properly and mention where you got their contact information (if sending an email) and how you know them (your own LinkedIn search, a recommendation from a common contact, an event you participated in, etc.). Don't be shy!

Approaching the connection – sample texts

"Dear Katja,

I've recently become interested in the nonprofit sector, and I'd love to learn more about it. Since you mentioned during our chat at the CEU's NGO Fair that you've worked with XYZ organization for several years, I was wondering if you'd be willing to meet with me to answer some questions about your experience with nonprofits?

Sincerely,

Max"

"Dear Istvan,

I will soon graduate from CEU (June 2019) with a masters in Sociology. In planning my future career goals, it would be useful for me to speak with someone who works in the corporate research field. I am hoping you might have 15 minutes to answer a few questions about how your SOCI degree and career path led you to your position with XYZ. Do you mind scheduling a brief skype conversation sometime next week? If ok, please suggest a time slot when I can call you. Thank you!

Respectfully, Joe Smith."