

SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR NETWORKING

A CARD SORT EXERCISE

Background to this card sort exercise

Networking, i.e. the ability to use contacts for discovering opportunities and helping you to make decisions, is probably the single most important skill you can develop if you want to be successful in life. This card sort exercise is one of a series of resources produced by the Career Development Centre (CDC) to assist you in the process of career networking. Before completing the exercise you should read the principal leaflet in the series - *Networking, the art of using contacts* - this explains the benefits of career networking and outlines how to find contacts and network with them.

The purpose of this card sort is to help you establish what you want to get out of a networking campaign. The exercise requires you to prioritise 55 different statements, each of which is a possible outcome of meeting with a contact in a field of work that interests you. The list of possible outcomes was derived from a search through literature on the topic of career networking. These outcomes are grouped into six main categories, according to the type of support being offered:

- Self Reflection & Awareness
- Action Planning
- Acquisition of Knowledge and Understanding of Career and Training Opportunities
- Experience and Observation of Work Activities
- Increasing Access to Contacts, Networks and Information Sources
- Development of Skills and Abilities

Once you have completed the card sort exercise, use the other CDC networking resources (listed on *Networking, the art of using contacts*) to help you carry out your networking.

Instructions for completing the card sort exercise

Step 1 – Cut out the cards on sheet 1 – these are the 4 header cards and 8 blank cards (to be used to add additional networking outcomes). Put these cards to one side.

Step 2 – Cut out the 55 item cards on sheets 2 – 7 (possible networking outcomes, categories A to F). Turn these cards over and shuffle them well to mix up cards from all the different categories.

Step 3 – Place the Header cards, in order (e.g. High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority, Not Important) at the top of your desk space.

Step 4 – Turn over the item cards, one by one, and place each under the header card which you feel most accurately reflects the level of importance you want to place on that Networking outcome.

Step 5 – If you think there are other outcomes that you would like to arise from your networking campaign, write each outcome on a blank card and place it under the appropriate header card.

Step 6 – Once you've laid out every item card, look at the results to see if you need to move some cards into different lists. It will not be possible to achieve all the outcomes. Your aim should be to have no more than 12 cards in the High Priority list.

Step 7 – Record the statements on all those cards which you have placed in your High Priority list – these will be the key objectives of your networking campaign. The CDC Networking Skills Help Sheet, *Record of Key Networking Objectives*, has been designed for the purpose of recording these objectives. As you network, use this sheet to assess your progress against each objective.

Step 8 – If you wish to record your decisions on ALL the item cards you can use the Help Sheet - *Outcomes of Networking*, which lists all the items in the card sort, to do this. You can initial your level of priority (i.e. H, M, L or N) against each item in the list. As you carry out your networking you might find it interesting to review the whole list to see how many of the outcomes you achieve.

SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR NETWORKING - CARD SORT EXERCISE

Sheet 1: HEADER CARDS and BLANK ITEM CARDS

1 HIGH PRIORITY (Must do this)	2 MEDIUM PRIORITY (Should try to do this)	3 LOW PRIORITY (Could possibly do this)	4 UNIMPORTANT (Don't need to do this)

Sheet 2 - Category A: Self Reflection and Awareness

<p>A1</p> <p>Evaluate my suitability for specific careers and jobs</p>	<p>A2</p> <p>Gain impartial feedback on how realistic my career plans are</p>	<p>A3</p> <p>See how my strengths and achievements, to date, could be used in the job areas I'm exploring</p>	<p>A4</p> <p>Identify the new skills, experience and qualifications that I will need to acquire</p>
<p>A5</p> <p>Identify the existing skills that I will need to develop or improve</p>	<p>A6</p> <p>Identify the support that I will need in the future</p>	<p>A7</p> <p>Identify the aspects of work that are likely to cause me stress and difficulty</p>	<p>A8</p> <p>Identify the balance I want between the various aspects of my life (work, leisure, family etc.)</p>
<p>A9</p> <p>Reflect on learning I've gained from the networking process so far</p>			

Sheet 3 - Category B: Action Planning

<p>B1</p> <p>Produce lists of jobs, careers and organisations I want to investigate further and plan how I will do this</p>	<p>B2</p> <p>Confirm jobs, careers and organisations I want to cross off my list of "possibles"</p>	<p>B3</p> <p>Establish how to overcome barriers to career entry & progression</p>	<p>B4</p> <p>Identify how I'm going to acquire the new skills, experience and qualifications I need</p>
<p>B5</p> <p>Produce lists of individuals to contact for further advice</p>	<p>B6</p> <p>Improve my CV</p>	<p>B7</p> <p>Develop appropriate career planning and job-search strategies</p>	<p>B8</p> <p>Set targets for future action I will take - in order to increase my knowledge, skills & experience</p>
<p>B9</p> <p>Keep a record of my observations and plans</p>			

Sheet 4 - Category C: Acquisition of Knowledge & Understanding of Career & Training Opportunities

<p style="text-align: center;">C1</p> <p>Identify the range of career and job opportunities available to me</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C2</p> <p>Find out about the range of activities involved in specific careers/jobs that interest me</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C3</p> <p>Learn which skills, qualities and experiences I'll need to get into the careers that interest me</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C4</p> <p>Find out about the volume and range of openings within work areas that interest me</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C5</p> <p>Find out the level of competition for vacancies within work areas that interest me</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C6</p> <p>Find out about job and work experience opportunities within my contacts' organisations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C7</p> <p>Gain knowledge about the major organisations (other than those of my contacts) in the field</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C8</p> <p>Gather published (hard-copy and web) information on careers/jobs that interest me</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C9</p> <p>Find out about the lifestyle implications of specific career choices that I am considering</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C10</p> <p>Identify long-term training opportunities</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C11</p> <p>Identify the major current developments/issues within career fields that I am considering</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C12</p> <p>Identify specific opportunities for skills training in the near future</p>

Sheet 5 - Category D: Experience & Observation of Work Activities

<p>D1</p> <p>Gain an insight into my contacts' past career experiences</p>	<p>D2</p> <p>Interview my contacts, away from the workplace, about their current work roles</p>	<p>D3</p> <p>Tour round my contacts' places of work</p>	<p>D4</p> <p>Get unpaid work-experience</p>
<p>D5</p> <p>Get paid work-experience</p>	<p>D6</p> <p>Undertake work shadowing (observe people doing their jobs) in work areas that interest me</p>		

Sheet 6 - Category E: Increasing Access to Contacts, Networks & Information Sources

<p>E1</p> <p>Get one or more of my contacts to act as my mentor</p>	<p>E2</p> <p>Develop more specific connections within my contacts' organisations and elsewhere</p>	<p>E3</p> <p>Identify useful sources/lists of individual contacts in career areas that interest me</p>	<p>E4</p> <p>Learn about general techniques for expanding my networks of contacts in the future</p>
<p>E5</p> <p>Identify useful sources/lists of firms and organisations in career areas that interest me</p>	<p>E6</p> <p>Learn about further sources of career-related information in work areas that interest me</p>	<p>E7</p> <p>Learn about sources of job vacancies and work experience opportunities</p>	<p>E8</p> <p>Learn about general techniques for identifying new information and vacancy sources</p>

Sheet 7 - Category F: Development of Skills and Abilities

<p>F1</p> <p>Improve my ability to ask appropriate questions</p>	<p>F2</p> <p>Practice receiving and giving feedback</p>	<p>F3</p> <p>Improve my ability to analyse information and experience</p>	<p>F4</p> <p>Learn how to make effective use of contacts</p>
<p>F5</p> <p>Improve my self-confidence</p>	<p>F6</p> <p>Gain experience of negotiation</p>	<p>F7</p> <p>Improve my skills of observation</p>	<p>F8</p> <p>Improve my skills of recording information, ideas and plans</p>
<p>F9</p> <p>Receive one-to-one teaching or coaching on specific skills and techniques</p>	<p>F10</p> <p>Attend specific skills training courses relevant to my future career</p>	<p>F11</p> <p>Arrange training or coaching for the future</p>	