



Preparing for Networking Events

There are several opportunities to network during your cadetship at VMI. Attending a networking event is an excellent way to meet new connections and begin preparing for your job search.

One Week Prior to the Event

1. Set up an appointment to have your resume reviewed by Career Services.
2. Research speakers or individuals that might be attending the event on [LinkedIn](#).
3. Make a list of individuals that you would like to meet during the event and questions you would like to ask (sample questions below).
4. Consider what you will wear to the event in advance and get it cleaned. Career Services will give you information about what uniform you will need to wear. If the event takes place during a Furlough period you should plan to wear professional or business casual clothing.
5. Make copies of your resume to share at the event and have an electronic version ready to send.
6. Prepare an elevator pitch (see page 2) to introduce yourself.

The Day of the Event

1. Leave plenty of time to get inspection-ready and be sure to arrive a few minutes early.
2. Mingle with the other attendees and be friendly and courteous; this is your first opportunity to make an impression.
3. Actively listen to the person you are talking with and be sure to ask open-ended questions to keep your conversation going.
4. Networking is a two-sided process meaning that both parties benefit. Networking events are an opportunity to build connections. Consider how you may be able to help or connect the individuals you meet with your network.
5. After each interaction, ask for a business card, pause, and take notes before going on to the next person.

Things to Bring With You:

- ✓ A pad folio or folder to carry your resume
- ✓ A notepad and pen to take notes
- ✓ Copies of your resume

After the Networking Event:

1. Review your notes from the networking event and make an action plan for follow-up.
2. Send emails no more than 48 hours after the event to the individuals that you met. Thank them for their time, ask any questions you may have, and extend an invitation to connect again. Make sure that the email is professional and review for grammatical errors.

Questions for Alumni

1. Does your work relate to your experience at VMI?
2. How did VMI prepare you for this career?
3. Any recommendations for the rest of my time at VMI?

Other Relevant Questions

1. How did you first get interested in this line of work?
2. What has been your career path?
3. What do you enjoy most about your industry? Least?
4. What is it like working for ___?
5. What are the duties/ responsibilities of your job?
6. What is your typical day like? Typical week?
7. What lifestyle choices have you made to work in your industry?
8. What is a typical career path in this organization?
9. What type of education or training is recommended to excel in the field?
10. What does it take to be successful in this field?
11. What kind of advice would you give to someone considering this field?
12. What books/ publications do you recommend?
13. What training have you received?
14. If you were to hire someone today, what are the attributes you would be looking for?
15. What classes do you recommend?

Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a quick, personal selling statement (typically 30-45 seconds). It can be used when meeting employers at career fairs, networking with alums, or during interviews. Here is a breakdown of how to create an elevator pitch:

1. First Statement: Present
 - a. This is a brief introduction to who you are; make sure to include something that differentiates you from others (major/minor, athletics, veteran, etc.).
 - i. Example: "Hello, my name is Tracy Jackson and I am completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science with a Minor in Cybersecurity at Virginia Military Institute."
2. Second Statement: Past
 - a. This statement covers your experience and skills, so why you are qualified for a certain job/ internship.
 - b. Think of leadership experience, work/internship experience, skills you have developed, classes you have taken, projects you have completed, etc.
 - c. One way to make this easier is to focus on 2 hard skills (ex. Java, C++) and 2 soft skills (communication, problem solving, etc.).
 - i. Example: "Last summer, I was a Cybersecurity Intern with Gryphon Technologies, where I further developed my problem solving and analytical skills by providing technical support and risk assessments using Oracle SQL. This was done through extensive data collection and analysis using Microsoft Excel, and I was allowed to analyze data with minimal supervision."
3. Third Statement: Future
 - a. Include your career interests or a specific goal (to work for a certain organization, have a certain position, etc.).
 - i. Example 1: "I am currently looking for a full-time position as a Cybersecurity Analyst in the Washington DC area."
 - ii. Example 2: "I am passionate about growing my knowledge and start in a career in the cybersecurity industry."