

# Your guide to Networking Nights, presented by SEED.

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Knowing where to start if you want to develop a professional profile can be tricky, especially if you know very little about what your options are. The good news? Most students out there are in the same boat as you.

When it comes to finding out the specifics - what opportunities are on the market, what kind of company you might want to work for - it helps to talk to a variety of people, such as your university lecturers, experienced industry professionals in different fields, and your fellow students.

Every year, Monash SEED hosts a variety of networking events to help students develop their confidence and learn more about the different industries in the market. Networking is a skill, and doesn't always come easily to everyone, which is why Monash SEED is proud to present our 2021 Networking Guide. The aim of this publication is to provide you with insight from your fellow students about how to network and get the most out of networking opportunities. This resource will (hopefully!) prompt you to work up your confidence and attend one of our networking nights this year!

**Table of content:**

<b>What is a networking night?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How to prepare for the night</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>On the night</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Guide on “How to speak to the guest”</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>After the Night</b>	<b>6</b>

# What is a networking night?

Networking - by its most formal definition - is the act of interacting and exchanging ideas between two individuals. Networking events provide an unparalleled opportunity to connect with both your peers and industry professionals. Put simply, it is a great opportunity to meet new people.

## Benefits of Networking

### Distinguish yourself from the crowd

The job market - especially graduate employment - can be a competitive world. One major distinguishing factor when it comes to the job market is your network - it's all about who you know!

### Growth and Development

Networking events help you build your confidence, by giving you the opportunity to connect and hold meaningful conversations with industry professionals. Being personable and an effective conversationalist can be almost as important as your university qualification!

### Expand your horizons

Networking events offer a diverse range of guests from various industries and professions. Industry guests have a wealth of knowledge to offer, highlighting their own personal experience and exciting career pathways.

## What to expect?

The composition of each networking night may vary, some networking events may have a theme. For example, SEED's *Corporate Social Responsibility Networking Night* is composed of three sections: a keynote speaker (where an experienced guest will speak on a topic related to the theme), a panel discussion (where guests are invited to answer questions from the audience), and most importantly the networking portion (where attendees are given the opportunity to connect with guests).

## Who to expect?

A networking night will host a swathe of guests from various firms and industries. Where there is a theme, guests may come from an array of industries. For example, SEED's *Social Entrepreneurship Networking Night* hosts a range of guests from ethical investment companies, charities, small businesses and Microfinance initiatives.

Networking nights provide a mutually beneficial opportunity for both students and guests. Industry representatives are able to showcase their

firm to the next generation of graduates, talk about the company culture and goals, and assess concerns and queries students may have.

## **How to prepare for the night**

### **Have a goal**

One important thing to do when preparing for any networking night is to have a goal in mind - know why you want to attend and what you want to get out of the night. Examples include “refining your career pathway”, or “learning about what companies and roles exist in your field of interest”. To make the most out of a networking night, we suggest you spend some time reflecting on and refining your goals, even doing some research on the guests that will be attending.

### **Update your LinkedIn and refine your social media**

LinkedIn is the largest professional social network on the internet. Setting up and maintaining a LinkedIn profile with a clean headshot, professional summary and relevant experience is essential. Following the conclusion of the networking night, LinkedIn will be the main platform where you will be able to reach out to industry guests. In fact, if you have the opportunity to speak to a guest one-on-one and want to stay connected in the future, the guest may suggest “add me on LinkedIn and we can connect!”, or, you might want to take the lead and mention, “it would be great to connect on LinkedIn and continue this conversation!”.

If you aren't confident with your LinkedIn profile, Monash Career Connect will teach you how to do it! Monash Career Connect's “How to LinkedIn” are a fantastic resource:

<https://www.monash.edu/career-connect/build/job-workshops/linkedin-profile>

### **Do some research**

The attendees and their firms will often be announced ahead of the event. Make the most of this information by researching the ethos and culture of the firms and individuals. If there is a particular guest you wish to connect with, look into their job title and area of expertise. You can use this information to generate some pre-prepare targeted questions that relate to the guest's area of expertise.

### **What to wear**

Networking nights will specify the attire for the night, make sure you are prepared in advance. There is no need to wear anything flashy or excessively formal, but keep in mind your appearance adds to the representative's first impression of you.

### **What to bring**

While not essential, it is good practice to have a small notebook as well as a pen, so you can jot down names, contact details and other information from the networking night. That being said, your phone will work equally as well, just be sure not to have it out during conversation and to keep it switched off or on silent during keynote speeches.

## **On the night**

### **Key points to remember**

#### Arrive on time

Make sure you arrive at the event on time, or even slightly early. Walking in late can leave a poor first impression on some of the guests - be sure to show enthusiasm, and be respectful of industry guests who are giving up their time to meet you.

#### Be attentive

Early on in the night, the MC will often introduce each guest and discuss their bio. It is important to listen to this information so when you have the opportunity to speak to an industry guest one-on-one, you know a little bit about them, which can help you strike up a conversation!

You will likely speak to various industry guests at the event, so be sure to remain enthusiastic and appreciative of their time by asking plenty of questions. Remember, these guests have dedicated their time to meet you and discuss any questions you may have about their role or industry. Think of each interaction as an opportunity to not necessarily 'get a job', but 'ask for advice'. You will be surprised how much more can gain from a conversation whilst being an active participant.

There also may be a panel or a keynote speaker at the event. This is a prime opportunity to learn about a key area of concern, relevant to the theme of the networking event, and be a good conversation piece during the one-on-one networking portion of the event.

#### Business etiquette

Networking nights are "working events" where the guests are attending in a professional capacity. This means that your behaviour and general bearing should correspond to what would be appropriate in an office/work setting. Remember your manners and to be courteous when talking to the guest, this may make all the difference when you later apply to the firm.

## Guide on “How to speak to the guest”

1. Have a goal.
  - a. Before entering the conversation, have a goal for what you want to get out of the conversation. This may relate to your overarching goal you have set for yourself, or a specific goal that can only be fulfilled by the guest you are about to speak to. For example, a specific goal may be to: “Find out the actual responsibilities that you may undertake on a day-to-day basis in your desired role.”
2. Introduce yourself and find out about the guest
  - a. It is crucial to build a rapport with the guest, you should not treat the conversation as a transaction. Introduce yourself in an organic manner, you may want to bring up what course you are doing, or even interests outside of uni, such as related volunteering work you pursue. If the guest was involved in the keynote speech or panel discussion portion of the night, you could strike up a conversation by commenting on something interesting they said.
3. Ask your questions
  - a. When you feel the time is right, show interest in the guest by asking them some questions. Try not to overwhelm the guest with a barrage of specific questions, instead, ask one open-ended question at a time and build on the answers given.
4. Give the guests an opportunity to ask questions about you
  - a. Remember, the guests also stand to gain something from the night. Give them an opportunity to delve into your interests and passions, and bounce ideas off one another. Don't be afraid to also explore some of the guests' passions and interests outside of work, this will allow you to build a stronger connection with the guest.
5. Conclude
  - a. When you feel the time is right and the conversation is coming to a close, conclude by thanking the guest for their time, and give a specific “gratitude” that relates back to something you've learnt from the conversation. This is where being attentive helps!
  - b. If you feel like you want to stay connected to the guests in the future, you may wish to connect to them via LinkedIn and take down relevant contact details.

6. Directly after the conversation
  - a. After the conversation, take down notes about the conversations as well as the names of the guest and company so that you may follow up with them at a later date.

## After the Night

After the night, connect with the guests via LinkedIn if you want to follow up with them at a later date. When connecting, it is a good idea to send them a message with your connection request to remind them of your interaction- show that the conversation and connection you made has left a lasting impression. Some examples may include:

*Hi Amy, it was great to meet you at Monash SEED's CSR Networking Night yesterday! Thank you for your time and your keynote speech on ethical investing. It would be great to stay connected in the future.*

- Jess

Try not to overwhelm them with questions, and take a reasonable amount of time between the night before following up. It is also important after the event to reflect on the night. This will be an important step in consolidating what you have learned from your conversations and to apply it to the overarching goal you have set.

At the end of the day, networking nights provide an amazing opportunity to connect with industry professionals and your peers. We suggest you try applying some of these techniques as SEED's upcoming **Social Entrepreneurship Networking Night** which will facilitate conversations with industry heads, start-ups and entrepreneurs. You may also like to attend the **Corporate Social Responsibility Networking Night** to connect with guests to learn how systemic issues like climate change and sustainability affect industries and how you can help shape the solution. We would love to see you there applying your new networking prowess!

### Upcoming dates:

**Social Entrepreneurship Networking Night:** Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> of August from 6pm

**Corporate and Social Responsibility Networking Night:** Wednesday 22<sup>th</sup> of September from 6pm

### Socials

Find out more about the Networking Nights by joining SEED via our website: <https://www.monashseed.org>

Connect with us via Facebook or Instagram:  
@monashseed

