

Academic Relations

Hosting a Student Networking Event

Networking is an essential career-building activity. It is about making connections and building mutually beneficial relationships. When it is done right, networking provides the most productive, most proficient and most enduring way to build relationships.

Although students can benefit greatly from networking, they have few opportunities to practice the skills to become proficient at it.

A networking activity targeted to students gives them a venue to learn the art of networking so they will be comfortable at any business social occasion. And the event can be structured so that students have the opportunity to meet internal audit practitioners and to learn more about the profession—while they are networking!



Overview

The networking event is ideally held off-campus and preferably at an office site after work hours. This venue and time most closely simulates other networking events and gives the students an opportunity to meet practitioners in a professional yet informal setting. Using chapter/institute contacts is one way to obtain permission to use company conference rooms at office sites. Public transportation or adequate parking should be considered. The chapter/institute should consider hosting parking if appropriate.

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The session should be scheduled for two hours, with a keynote or guest speaker to start the evening. The best speakers for this type of event include life coaches, recruiters, human resource directors—those with experience in recruiting, hiring, or coaching others to be hired. The presenter should open with a relevant topic. Good choices include: Tips for Interviewing, Office Etiquette, Planning Your Career, Networking Do's and Don'ts, and Professional Social Media as examples. After the presentation, the attendees are invited to move the chairs to the side of the room and the networking session begins.

Some Pointers/Suggestions

- Students and internal audit professionals are invited.
- The event is free to everyone.
- Schedule the event after work hours (5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.).
- RSVP is strongly recommended so coordinators can plan accordingly.
- Food is provided (pizza and soft drinks are always appreciated).
- Door prizes are a plus. Consider gifts that are relevant to the presentation made (e.g., networking books, interviewing skill books).
- Prepare name tags for everyone.
- Sign-in sheets are a good way to collect information so students can be added to mailing lists and receive future chapter/institute event announcements.
- An overview of internal auditing is provided at the start of the presentation; materials and brochures are made available for students to learn more about The IIA and local chapter/institute activities.
- A follow-up thank you email is sent to all attendees, which includes links to the chapter/institute website and highlights upcoming events.
- Providing business cards with Networking Tips (or posting them on a wallboard) will help students to practice networking skills.

Sample Timeline to Event

| Step | Timeline to Event | Activity / Task |
|------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 2 – 3 months prior | Confirm location and facility. |
| 2 | 2 – 3 months prior | Confirm speaker/presenter. |
| 3 | 2 months prior | Send out flier, announcement (include students, college professors, deans, university career centers, and chapter/institute's distribution lists). Best Practice: use Evite or other social media for invitations. |
| 4 | 1 month prior | Recruit volunteers to help with the event. Send out reminder emails. Collect and verify RSVPs and follow up with attendees by phone, email, or social media about the upcoming event – promote the door prizes and other top value items (not necessarily monetary value). |
| 5 | 2 – 3 days prior | Order food (e.g. pizza, soft drinks). Send out reminder emails, notices. |
| 6 | Day of | Remember to bring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IIA and chapter/institute brochures - Name tags - Biography fliers of speaker/presenter - Thank you gift for speaker/presenter - Door prizes - Attendee sign-in sheet - Business cards |

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|------|-------------------|--|
| 7 | 1 day after | Send thank you note to speaker/presenter, volunteers, and to those providing the use of the office or conference/training room. |
| 8 | 1 day after | <p>Send follow-up email to all participants. This is an opportunity to 'touch base' with students once again, and to include them on the chapter/institute's distribution list.</p> <p>Include in the follow-up email: notice of upcoming chapter/institute events, next student events, and other activities that would be of interest to students.</p> |