IT’S WHAT YOU KNOW AND WHO YOU KNOW

Sharon Bernstein is a former SVP and Director of Digital Analytics at Mediavest. In her accomplished career in digital and marketing analytics, Sharon used networking for her own job searches and also to hire over 30 analysts during her 20-year career.

With the interest in data analyst jobs increasing 5x in the last 10 years (source: Google Trends), networking has never been more important for a qualified candidate to get his or her resume in front of a hiring manager. But, like searching for a job, networking requires strategy and preparation.

Know Your Audience

Always know your audience, and research what he or she does before reaching out.

Look up the contact on LinkedIn, review his work history and contacts; you might know people in common and can mention this in your email or phone conversation to break the ice.

Research the company in which he or she works for and prepare three to five questions you might have about the company (e.g., the culture, work environment, etc).

Google both the contact and the company to see if there are any recent news articles or current events in which they are mentioned for context.

HOW TO REACH OUT

When sending an email, always introduce yourself, and state where you obtained the recipient’s contact information. This might seem obvious, but you’d be surprised how many people leave this part out. If you don’t include this information, your email is likely to be skipped over or filed with general solicitations.

• “My name is Sharon Bernstein, and like you, I am a graduate of [Tufts University]. I came across your contact information in the [Career Advisory Network].”

• “My name is Sharon Bernstein. I hope you don’t mind that our mutual friend, [John Smith], gave me your contact information.”

• “My name is Sharon Bernstein, and I recently graduated from Level, Northeastern’s data and analytics boot camp. Your name came up in conversation with [John Smith] as someone who would be a good person to network with as I start my job search.”
SHARING YOUR BACKGROUND

Everyone started somewhere! Don’t be ashamed if you don’t have a lot of experience. Provide background on your skillset, even if it’s not 100% applicable.

- “I just graduated from college with a degree in mathematics. I studied SPSS, SQL, and R as part of my major, and I did two internships (one at Microsoft and one at Google).”
- “I was an English teacher for three years before I decided to switch gears and become a data analyst. I’ve recently started studying stats and coding, and completed a summer at IBM.”

BE HONEST AND DIRECT

Be honest and forthcoming as to why you’re reaching out; don’t beat around the bush. Also provide your desired geographical location.

- “I am currently living in Miami, but I am looking for a position in a large advertising agency in New York City. Do you have any words of advice for someone starting out in the industry?”
- “Your role as Digital Analytics Group Director sounds very interesting; I would love to hear more about your career path, how you got to where you are.”
- “Do you think someone with my background would be qualified for an entry level job in analytics at [MediaVest]? If so, who is the appropriate person I should reach out to regarding open positions?”

THANK IN ADVANCE

Proactively thank the recipient for his or her time and response. Most importantly, always acknowledge a response, whether you like the feedback you received or not.

- “I am sure you are terribly busy, so I appreciate any insight and assistance you can provide. Thank you in advance.”

Don’t be pushy and offer up your phone number unless they ask. This can be a huge turn off.
MEETING IN PERSON

Most likely, the contact will respond with guidance if they are busy, an offer to meet for a cup of coffee if you’re local, or schedule a phone call if you are in different parts of the country. This is where your previous research is really important. Treat the meeting like a job interview; make sure you are prepared for the conversation with the following:

• Show that you did your homework on the contact and his or her company. Why did you reach out?
• What interests you about him or her?
• What is the desired outcome for conversation?
  - A direct connection to the hiring manager for a specific job?
  - Feedback on your resume?
  - A mentor for career guidance?
  - A contact for future job connections?

If you are meeting in person, dress to impress. While you don’t need to wear a formal suit, make sure to keep your jeans at home even if it’s just a coffee date. You want to create a strong first impression. Be prepared, bring a notebook or tablet to take notes.

POST MEETING

ALWAYS thank the recipient for taking the time to meet with you. Whether you “connected” or not, always acknowledge the feedback provided. You never know if and when you will cross paths again.

To keep the conversation going, send him or her a LinkedIn request. But, keep it professional and do not send a Facebook friend request. And, make sure to follow up on any specific next steps discussed in a timely manner (e.g., send a copy of your resume if he or she requested one).

This article is the second part of a series of articles on launching your career in analytics. Read part one and part three now.