

The Best Advice I Ever Got: Know Someone

At first glance, that little piece of advice may seem daunting and hopeless. Am I only going to have a good career if I know someone? What about all these skills that I tirelessly and relentlessly poured hours into? What about that all-nighter I pulled to study for three midterms the following day? What about all the unpaid internships I completed?

Does any of that matter? Well, yes absolutely it matters. This advice does not downplay the utmost importance placed on your academic skills and knowledge; rather, it *complements* it.

That's what the Career Quest New York Trip taught me. When meeting with all these distinguished figures in companies like Time Inc. or New York Times or Google, every single person had the same exact thing to say: network.

The trip really highlighted the importance of networking. Having contacts to reach out to in different industries not only helps you get your foot in the door, but it showcases your interpersonal communication skills and highlights your determination—two qualities almost every single company requires. And the thing is, contacts want to help you just as much as you want to be helped. Many of the people we met with were fresh graduates thrown into the real world just as we're about to be. They understand the purely terrifying reality of applying for jobs without the security of school. They sympathize with our wide and questioning eyes.

So take advantage of that. If you have questions, ask. If you have concerns, bring them up. If you need advice, seek it out. Be proactive. Meet and introduce yourself to anyone and everyone that interests you. Sending a friendly email takes two minutes in return for a lifetime of mentorship.

But to impress those contacts, to preserve those relationships, you need to be skillful and knowledgeable. Without demonstrating your worth, networking seems futile. But without networking, showcasing your skills to employers seems impossible. That is why you need both; but more often than not, we push networking aside as an afterthought without even recognizing how vital it is.

So, yes—work hard, learn a lot, develop skills, but most importantly: know someone.