Networking and Finding Advocates

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With many thanks to prior speakers on this topic
Introductions
Trilce Estrada

Research:
In-situ analysis, distributed and scalable learning, applications in medicine and science

- Originally from Mexico
- BS, Universidad de Guadalajara and MS, INAOE
- PhD, University of Delaware
- Associate Professor, University of New Mexico
- 2015 NSF Career Award
- 2019 ACM-SIGHPC Emerging Woman Leader in Technical Computing
- 2022 Woman in Technology Award by NMTC
- Graduated 4 PhD, 9 MS, 2 undergrads
- Mom to 1 kid and 1 dog
Sujata Banerjee - My Career Journey

Indian Institute of Technology
IIT Bombay
B.Tech. and M.Tech.

Univ. of Southern California
Ph.D.

Univ. of Pittsburgh
Associate Professor
Assistant Professor

HP Labs
Sr. Researcher
Sr. Manager
Distinguished Technologist and Director

VMware Research
Vice President, Research
Sr. Director of Research
Sr. Staff Researcher


Communities – ACM SIGCOMM, IEEE Communications Soc., CRA CCC, NSF

https://research.vmware.com
The path to success

It takes a community to help you succeed and reach your full potential.

It is both WHAT you do and know, and WHO you know!
Networking

**IS**

Interacting with other people to exchange information and develop contacts especially to further your career.

**IS NOT**

- A substitute for quality work
- Just socializing or idle chit-chat
- Using people, name-dropping
Why Network?

• Building and publicizing your brand/reputation
• Becoming aware of new opportunities
• Identifying collaborators
• Learning about new ideas and approaches
• Getting invited to program committees, review panels, keynotes, journal editorship, etc.
Networking: How, Where, Who?
Where to Network?  
(Answer: Everywhere!)

• School  
• Work  
• Conferences and workshops  
• Technical talks/seminars  
• Industry Meet-ups  
• Summer internships  
• Sabbaticals  
• Program Committee Meetings  
• NSF Panel and other review meetings  
• Social settings  
• HERE
Who: Make a targeted list

Know **why and who** you want to add to your network (e.g., before an event). And know **what** you want from your network! And not just people from your own discipline!

- Established Researchers in academia and industry in diverse disciplines
- Contemporaries/peers – both junior and senior
- People who have open job positions or internships
- Industry technologists and leaders
- Technical advisors and experts
- Alumni
- NSF Program managers
- Venture capitalists
- Friends and neighbors
Networking Opportunities

• Conferences/Workshops
  • Volunteer
  • Find someone alone and start a conversation
  • Keep a short introduction/pitch ready – practice!!

• Talks/Seminars
  • Ask a question
  • Read the paper beforehand

• School/work
  • Informal and formal meetings with your colleagues, students
  • Meet with visitors coming to campus
  • Participate in committees

• Industry internships/sabbaticals
  • Get to know interns from other schools/disciplines
  • Get to know folks other than your mentors.

• Non-professional venues
Networking: build a plan

Give yourself a goal for an event
• Example: meet 2 new people, talk with 1 research leader, etc.

Find group networking opportunities
• Example: N2Women lunches, dinner, conference outing, reception, student dinners
• Join a group that is casually talking and introduce yourself.
  (Don’t barge into private conversations)
• Sit down with people you don’t know at tables.

Prepare: Example: Read papers ahead and write down questions you want to ask.

Some Tips:
• Ask for help – introductions from your advisor, senior colleagues and mentors
• Volunteer: PCs, Panels, Conference organization jobs
• Follow up by email. Send your latest paper.
• Call the NSF/DARPA/other funding program managers.
• Don’t be discouraged if people don’t remember you. Reintroduce yourself.
At conferences: DO’s

✓ Be yourself, Be active, Be confident
✓ Wear your badge visibly
✓ Speak! (don’t just stand there)
✓ Use the dreaded microphone
✓ Talk to speakers after their presentations
✓ Talk to the person next to you
✓ Look people in the eyes
✓ Make lunch/dinner plans
✓ Attend social activities
✓ Get your friends/advisor to introduce you
✓ Make plans for follow up (write it down!)
✓ Re-connect with people you’ve met before
At Conferences, DON’T

DON’T hang around with your friends
DON’T interrupt private conversations
DON’T be overly negative/critical
DON’T hang on to a conversation too long
DON’T put too much stock in a single, short conversation
DON’T get discouraged
DON’T hide in your room
Finding Advocates

Advocates are sometimes called sponsors, so we will use that term too.
Your network is like a tree

- Mentors (trunk)
- Mentees (leaves)
- Peers (branches)
- Sponsors (roots)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mentors advice</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sponsors act</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reduce isolation and stress</td>
<td>• Connect you to career opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help navigate unwritten rules</td>
<td>• Advocate for your advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Build confidence</td>
<td>• Support risk-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide tips and strategies</td>
<td>• Publicly endorse you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote inclusion</td>
<td>• Help you confront bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expect high performance in return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://ncwit.org/resources/sponsors-vs-mentors-whats-the-difference-infographic/
How to identify a potential mentor/sponsor

Do your research: develop specific questions about your wants/needs

Identify what you want to achieve in this relationship

- Base mentorship around solving specific issues/questions
- Base sponsorships by offering specific strengths

Determine what are essential qualities you want in a mentor/sponsor

- Influence, personality, availability

https://mentorcruise.com/blog/how-do-you-build-successful-mentor-mentee-relation/
How to approach a sponsor/mentor for the first time

- Get introduced by someone in common
  - Another mentor/peer/mentee
- Find them at conferences and introduce yourself
  - Elevator pitch: you get in a elevator with your professional idol, you have 30 seconds to introduce yourself and make an impression
- Volunteer and then you have an excuse to talk to them
- Read their work and send an email
And they may still forget you (85% of the time)

- Do not take it personally, reintroduce yourself
- Find a way to stay under their radar
  - do: specific conference, common activity, linkedin, twitter
  - do not: stalk them in their personal social media
Cultivating a sponsor/mentor-protégé relationship

1. Create opportunities for research/education/business-focused conversations
2. Ask for specific advice and take it, provide updates
3. Follow up: “is it okay if I follow up with you in X time?”
4. This is a relationship: give and take
5. Practice excellence

>> Do not ask directly for a sponsorship. It just does not work that way.

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/06/03/essay-difference-between-mentors-and-sponsors-academe
Takeaway

Developing powerful relationships through networking and finding advocates is too important to leave it up to chance.

It all starts with you taking steps to build your network and to find sponsors.
Your network is like a tree, and like a tree, it needs work to keep alive

- **Sponsors** (roots)
- **Mentors** (trunk)
- **Peers** (branches)
- **Mentees** (leaves)
Think of your mentors and sponsors. How are they different? Do your current mentors act as sponsors?

What evidence do you have that someone is sponsoring you?

Who are potential sponsors for you?

Share with neighbor
Thank you!