Tips for Compelling Off-Campus Correspondence

• If you have a choice, start with a company contact with a few years experience versus a senior executive. These individuals will have a better idea of what you would be doing on a daily basis and are likely to be more candid and have more availability to speak with you.

• For pure networking emails, send an introductory email request for an informational interview. If you don’t hear anything, send a follow up email two weeks later. However if you have applied for a position within the company, feel free to follow up with your contact a week to ten days after the initial email, perhaps with a phone call. This is easier to do if you reference how you will follow up in the initial email. Be professionally persistent.

• Avoid asking for a job (usually the outreach alone indicates you are seeking a position). Avoid sending your resume for the same reason.

• Keep your email short. Cover who you are, why you want to speak with them in particular; why you are interested in their firm in particular, and make a request (time to meet, etc.)

• Each email should be unique. Doing your company research, and understanding the details of the function you are interested in, makes a difference in response rates. The more detailed and specific your request, the harder it is to ignore.

• Don’t asking for a job or referral before establishing a relationship, people feel more obligated and willing to help people they know.

• Clearly communicate what you are interested in, including specifics, to everyone you know - friends, family, classmates (even random people you meet at events such as weddings, etc). This will help them help you.

• Follow up. Be sure to touch base with everyone in your network and give them an update on your search every other month.

Common Misconceptions

• A lead/contact is not worth exploring because a connection to what I want to do is not obvious.

  Fact: Most job leads come in the 3rd to 5th layers of networking.

• A lead/contact is not worth pursuing because they are not in a position to hire me and they don’t have any positions available right now anyway.

  Fact: 65-85% of all executive jobs come through personal contacts; most jobs are never even posted
High Response Rates – Sample Emails

• “I am a second year student at Chicago Booth interested in getting to know more about Acacia Venture Partners. I am especially interested in your firm because of your focus on investing in the healthcare industry. My professional experience and interests lay in the healthcare industry, and I have a great interest in early stage investments. Would you have fifteen minutes on Friday to have a conversation about the various projects you are working on?”

• “I am a current first year student at Chicago Booth. I have read about your fixed income products, and found your firm particularly interesting because of the numerous strategies used to increase the value of your fixed income portfolios. I would love to discuss the firm’s approach with you if you have 20 minutes to speak with me in the upcoming week.”

• “My name is X and I am a first year MBA student at The University of Chicago’s Graduate school of Business concentrating in Marketing. I recently read the Business Week article on X and was blown away by the unique creative and analytical process behind your business as well as some of your incredible developments – especially X. I will be traveling to NYC this Friday and with your time permitting, I would love any opportunity to speak with you or another representative at the firm.”

• “My name is X and I am a second year student at Chicago Booth. I am trying to find out more about beginning a career in fundamental equity research after working in this area for my summer internship. More specifically, I am trying to find out more about X company as a place to work. I noticed through the Booth community directory that you worked there in the past so I felt that you would be a good contact. It would help me a great deal if we could discuss, possibly through email or a phone conversation, the best ways to begin a career in equity research and possibly one with X company.”

• “I just wanted to follow up on our conversation six weeks ago. I recently saw X’s $10B commitment to alternative energy investing and lending. I don’t know if you recall, but this is an area that I have worked in and one in which I remain interested. One of the things I found so interesting about your firm was its dedication to this evolving field. I would love to learn more about the work related to this investment. I would appreciate an opportunity to chat again if possible.”

• “I am a current full-time MBA student at the University of Chicago seeking a career at a leading, large-cap private equity firm like X. In that spirit I was hoping you might be available to have a brief phone conversation with me in the coming weeks about the firm, its strategy and its culture. Also, I would appreciate any insights you would to share on how you were able to leverage your Chicago Booth MBA into a job at a large-cap private equity fund and any advice for a current student wishing to do the same. Prior to Chicago Booth, I spent three years as an analyst in a middle market investment bank focusing on financial sponsors. I look forward to hearing from you.”

Low Response Rates – Sample Emails

• “I am a second year student at Chicago Booth. I am a former technology consultant and I am very interested in getting into venture capital. Would you have a few minutes to talk?”
  
  **Problem:** Not specific enough or tailored to the person, position or company.

• “As Chicago Booth’s primary recruiting contact at X, I am writing to find out if there are upcoming opportunities for X position. I have a background in accounting and am looking to get into product management. I am a current second year student and am very interested positions that would allow me to gain a breadth of experience, and allow me to learn from the best. Provided you have the time I would love to talk to you about the various positions in the firm and learn more about the company and gain your perspective. Please feel free to contact me via email or phone at your convenience.”
  
  **Problem:** Asking for a job before establishing a relationship. Focused on what the student wants vs. what the student can offer the firm.