

Strive to Thrive

Career Tips For Ted Rogers School Students

These reports leverage the expertise of BCH staff to share best practices for students & alumni.

Brewing Connections Through Coffee Chats

March 2024

You've probably heard about coffee chats before but what exactly are they? Coffee chats offer you an opportunity for a quick, casual, yet meaningful conversation with someone from industry - they are much less formal than a typical interview, but provide you a chance to sit down with a professional and ask them questions about their role, their company and the industry they are in.

Coffee chats allow you to connect with others and learn about their career journey - from their undergrad to their current role, insights into the company they work at, and career advice. These conversations help you gather insight from those who are established in their careers.

Do Not Ask for a Job

The purpose of a coffee chat is to learn more about a particular type of role, not to land a job. The time that someone spends with you is a 'gift' - treat it as such!

How to Set up a Coffee Chat

Bottomline- you need to make the first move. Not everyone will respond to your request for a coffee chat, but be persistent and keep asking others. Do not be discouraged by a lack of response. Here are a few ways to set up a coffee chat on your own;



Use this [LinkedIn](#) report to learn how you can leverage LinkedIn.



Initiate conversations through **cold emails**.



Leverage **existing connections** to ask for introductions to individuals in your desired industry or role.



Did You Know? The BCH organizes and hosts Alumni Coffee chats in their offices - this is the perfect opportunity to meet TRSM alumni working in industry to learn more about the industry in which they work, and what they did to get there.

Who Should You Target?



Alumni: Approach alumni for relatable experiences and gain insights on how they transitioned to the professional world.



Industry Connections: Network with professionals who can provide firsthand knowledge and opportunities in your field of interest. You can meet many industry professionals through **LinkedIn** or **Networking Events**.



Students in Industry: Engage with students who already have workplace experience to gain insight into the application process and their experience working.



Career or Co-op Coordinators: Reach out to staff within the Business Career Hub to gain valuable insights on potential pathways and opportunities.



Did You Know? It is relatively easy to find and connect with Alumni. Use [How to Connect with Alumni](#) Hub Insights Report to learn more.

Best Practices in Requesting a Chat?

When requesting a coffee chat, your messaging is important. Here is a template you can customize:

Subject: *Coffee Chat Request to Discuss [Topic]*

Hi [Industry Professional's Name],

I hope you are doing well! I had a great time chatting with you during [specific event], and I am truly impressed by your experiences and insights. I would love the opportunity to discuss [specific topic or area of interest].

Would you be available for a virtual/in-person coffee chat on/at [virtual meeting platform or Name of Coffee Shop] on [Day of the Week] at [Time] for [Length of Time]? I am eager to hear your thoughts on [specific topic] and gain some valuable insights from your perspective.

Please let me know if this time works for you, or if there is a more convenient time.

Looking forward to the possibility of meeting you!

*Warm regards,
[Your Name]*



Did You Know? Usually, coffee chats range from 15-30 minutes but be sure to inquire about the professional's availability.



Ted Rogers Student Profile



BTM Student, 5th Year

AMANDA CAMPBELL



As someone with little relevant experience in my field, I've had to rely heavily on my connections to gain an understanding of potential career pathways that align with my interests.

One of my most successful connections started on campus at a Career Fair hosted by ITMSA where I was able to network with a Campus Recruitment Lead from a large IT Consulting company to secure a coffee chat. During this coffee chat, my approach was to learn everything I could about the industry professional and the company. After the call, my future felt less daunting. I knew that the right company would find my unique background valuable and would be supportive in helping me figure out my career journey. Over a year later, I was personally reached out to by an industry professional to apply for an amazing role within the company.

If I were to leave everyone with some advice, I would say to be genuinely interested in the person in front of you. I always found time to ask that person about their career journey and truly connect with them on professional and personal interests.

1 Prepare

Preparing for a coffee chat involves conducting thorough research on the individual you'll be meeting with, particularly focusing on their career pathway and accomplishments.

- **LinkedIn** is a valuable resource for **gathering information** about their professional background and areas of expertise.
- **Identifying common interests** or shared connections can help establish rapport and facilitate a meaningful conversation.
- **Prepare thoughtful questions** about their career journey and experiences, demonstrating your genuine interest in learning from their insights.
- Approach the conversation with a **mindset geared towards learning** and gaining valuable knowledge from their expertise.

2 Keep it Conversational

During a coffee chat, the key is to create space for an organic and genuine conversation.

- **Keep the conversation natural** and flowing, avoiding a structured interview format. It's not about seeking immediate referrals or being able to ask a list of questions; rather, it's an opportunity to build a genuine professional relationship.
- **Focus on making the other person feel valued** and important. People enjoy talking about themselves, so encourage them to share by asking open-ended questions and showing genuine interest in their responses.
- **Ask thoughtful questions** about their experiences and interests. The goal is to get to know them as a person, rather than solely seeking insights into a specific company or industry.
- **Confidence** is key, and it's essential to take the lead in steering the conversation while remaining mindful of time constraints.

3 Send a Thank You Note!

After a coffee chat, it's courteous to **send a thank you email** to express appreciation for the time and insights shared during the conversation. In the email, you can convey your gratitude, reiterate key points discussed during the chat, and express interest in staying connected.

Additionally, you can suggest the possibility of scheduling another coffee chat in the future, emphasizing your desire to continue learning from them and maintaining the connection. Keeping the email concise, genuine, and appreciative helps leave a positive impression and lays the foundation for ongoing communication and relationship-building.

Here is a thank you email template you can customize:

Subject: *Thank You for the Coffee Chat*

Hi [Industry Professional's Name],

I wanted to take a moment to thank you for meeting with me for a coffee chat earlier today. Our conversation was truly insightful and I enjoyed our discussion on [specific topic or area of interest].

I appreciate the time you took to share your experiences and expertise with me as I continue to grow in [specific industry/field].

Thank you once again for your time. I look forward to staying in touch and hopefully meeting again soon.

*Warm regards,
[Your Name]*

Want to Learn More for Free?



LinkedIn Learning

Learn how to improve your interpersonal skills through courses offered on LinkedIn Learning. [Click here to register](#). (Students studying in Toronto can gain free access to LinkedIn Learning. [Learn more here](#))



TMU Future Student Blog

Discover essential strategies for mastering coffee chats with insights from Emma Young-Buchalter's blog on [How to nail a coffee chat](#). These tips equip you with the skills to navigate and excel in these crucial networking opportunities



Visit the Business Career Hub

Employer Events

Interested in expanding your network and meeting industry professionals? BCH organizes and hosts many industry events - refer to your 'Careers Newsletter' or visit [here](#).

Bootcamps/Prep Programs

Microsoft Excel - Financial Modeling - VBA - Tableau - PowerBI - Ace This Case Capital Markets - R - Python
[Click here to register for current bootcamps.](#)

Career Coaching

For career coaching, interview prep and more, [schedule a 1:1 appointment](#) with a Career Consultant or a Co-op Coordinator.



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[TRSM Business Career Hub](#)



www.torontomu.ca/trsm-careers/



Career Consultant Contributor Tania Rasie

Tania is a Career Consultant and a graduate of the Ted Rogers Co-op program. She has experience in campus and early talent recruitment within the IT industry. She aims to assist students in uncovering their career passions while leveraging their unique strengths.



Student Contributor Jaskirat Singh

Jaskirat is a Global Management Studies Co-op student currently working as a Project Coordinator for the Business Career Hub. He is passionate about community building and is heavily involved on campus as a member of the Ted Rogers Management Conference (TRMC) and Top 200 program.