Networking Rebranded:

A non-instructional intervention

Detailed Design

Peter Dimitrakopoulos – Michael Di Giacomo

Concordia University

April 12, 2016

Networking Rebranded? What does that mean?

After speaking to a number of administrators and students within the Department of Education, our team has come to the conclusion that the term "networking" harbours negative connotations and is generally misunderstood by those who seek to most benefit from engaging in it. The long-term goal of our campaign is to change attitudes towards and perceptions of "networking".

This will require a number of interventions. One that is absolutely necessary, and one that is not provided by Concordia University, is an information page that can be easily accessed by curious students. Despite providing students access to a great number of resources, Concordia University does not provide any information that could help students connect with their peers and their professors. Students must search for external links in order to find the information, coming across conflicting opinions and a variety of attitudes that can be found on online blogs and career-building websites. We have envisioned a space in which that information is consolidated and reviewed by experts in the field to ensure its accuracy, providing Concordia students a trustworthy reference and guide.

Most importantly, our F.A.Q. will seek to dispel the myths that are associated with networking, as well as highlight alternative forms of networking, for those who may find the formal event to be a source of anxiety and stress.

Intervention: Networking Information Page

The following document describes the detailed design of a Networking Information Page, which is one of the proposed interventions for this performance improvement campaign.

It is set up as a FAQ page, which people consult for any questions or concerns they have regarding networking. Consultation of the Networking Information Page occurs online, making this intervention available to users at their convenience.

Sponsor

The sponsor for the intervention is the The Chair of the Department of Education, who requested the assessment of the performance needs assessment and, consequently, the development of the performance improvement campaign.

Users

The main users of the intervention are graduate students from the Department of Education. This includes students enrolled in the following programs: Educational Technology, Applied Linguistics, Child Studies, Educational Studies, Instructional Technology, Adult Education, TESL. The users are divided into two performer groups: introverts and extroverts.

Objectives Addressed

By making use of the Networking Information Page, students will be able to meet the following objectives:

- Given support services provided by the University, students will develop their interpersonal and communication skills
- Given an understanding of networking is and what it constitutes as a practice, students will use networking in a number of formal and informal settings.

Attaining these objectives, in conjunction with other campaign interventions, will lead to a rebranding or revamping of the term “networking”. In turn, this will excite students about networking opportunities, both formal and informal, resulting in increased participation in campus events.

Description of the Intervention

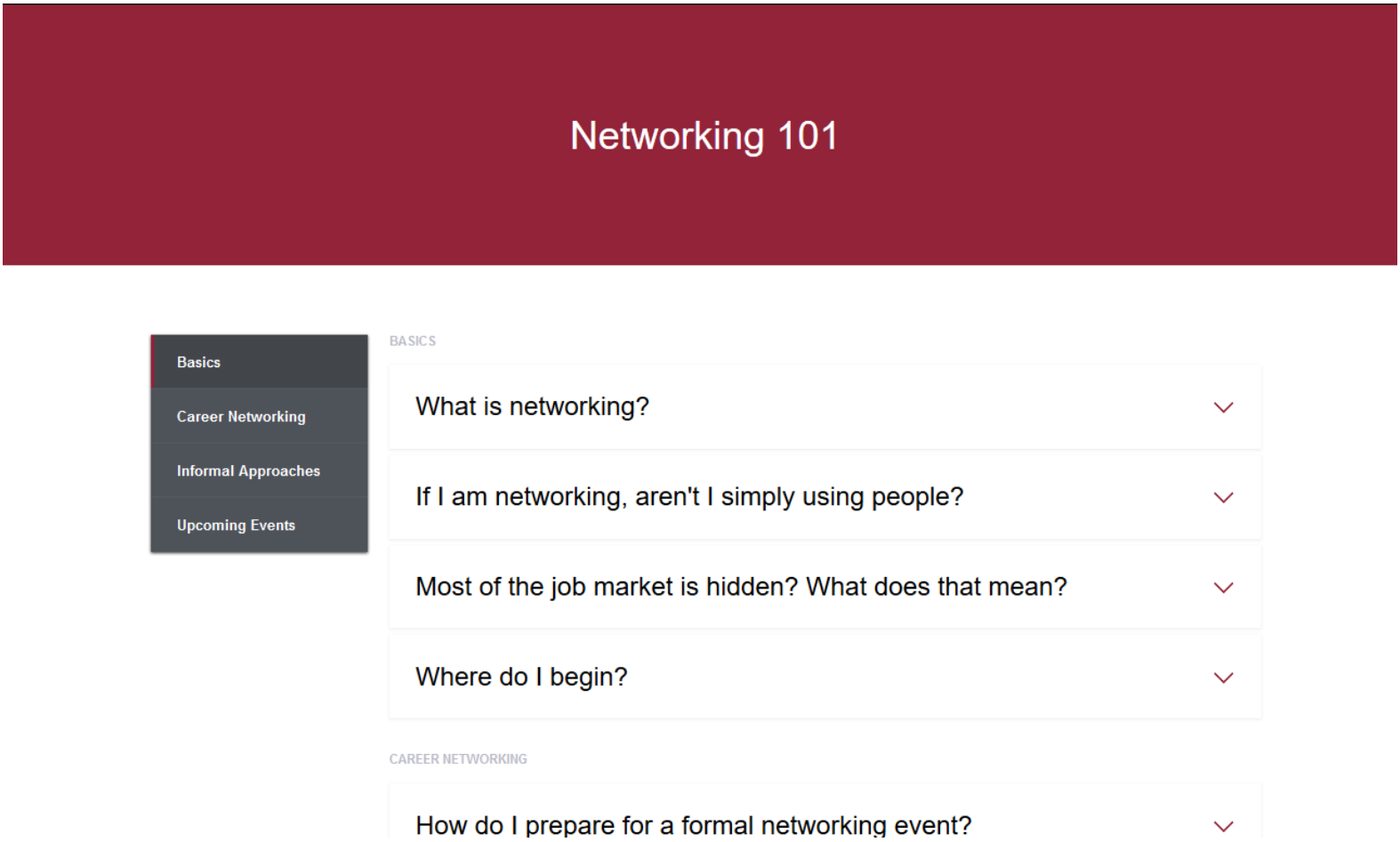
This intervention accommodates the busy lifestyles graduate students. Through Concordia, a networking information page will be set up, complete with frequently asked questions. Students will be able to access this page through Concordia’s website. Upon the launch of the FAQ, the link will be featured on Concordia’s landing page in order to promote the intervention. This intervention will be especially useful for students who are more introverted, as they are more comfortable keeping to themselves. This will also help those who are extroverted, as this intervention will serve as an information tool.

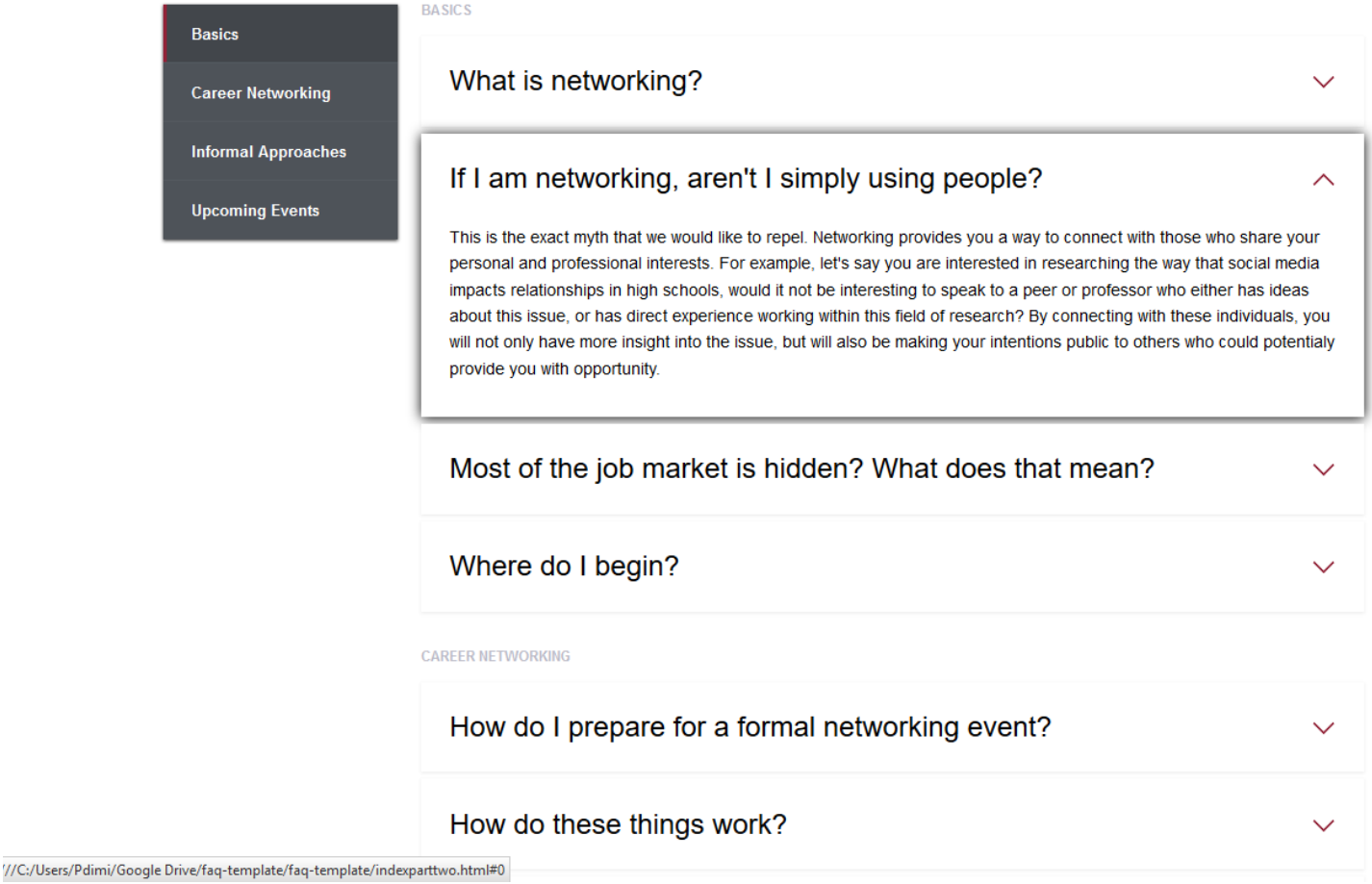
This intervention is justified by the data collected through interviews and surveys, that many students are not fully informed about networking and what it constitutes as a practice. Furthermore, students feel that the information that is distributed does not always apply to them, so more often than not they just ignore it. This FAQ page will be tailored to give general information and if more detail is required, students can message an advisor through the web page.

Page Structure

Why choose to present the information using expandable/collapsible content areas?

Expandable/collapsible content areas allows for information to be quickly accessed. Rather than have the user scroll constantly through an endless wall of text, expandable content areas provide the user a quick way to locate the information that they need. The collapsible option also provides a quick way to hide information that has already been processed, allowing the user to quickly move on to the next question. Finally, this option allows for every question to immediately appear on the page, giving the user a way to rapidly survey all of the questions and select those they deem most useful.





Editorial Guidelines [color, font, logos, etc.]

Production of the F.A.Q. page will require a strict adherence to Concordia University's Brand Standards Manual.

- The page will follow Concordia's CUBe look. This look calls for specific parameters to be followed with regard to positive and negative space, colour, font, layout, and typography.
- Any use of the Concordia logo must adhere to the rules of the Brand Standards Manual and ensure that the logo is in no way used inappropriately or altered. Everything from the colours to be used, to the spacing between the words and images must conform to the Manual.

CUBe:	Cool Urban Bold edgy
Colours:	Concordia Burgundy: RGB 146, 35, 56 Hexadecimal #922338 Concordia Gold: RGB 203, 181, 118 Hexadecimal #CBB576
Font:	Gill Sans MT Pro
Writing/Editorial Guidelines:	Concordia University uses the 16th edition of The Canadian Press Stylebook and the second edition of The Canadian Oxford Dictionary

Formative Evaluation Instruments

Editor's Review (Written component)

An editorial review will take place, assessing the completeness and style of the content used in the FAQ. The editor for the written component would look for inconsistencies in vocabulary, language used, spelling and grammar.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The grammar is correct					
The syntax is correct					
The vocabulary used is clear					

Language is appropriate					
Language and vocabulary conform to Concordia's Editorial Guidelines					
Additional Comments:					

Editor's Review (Design and brand)

An editor and design expert would be assigned the task of looking over and reviewing the visual aspects of the networking information page. They would ensure that the page conforms to the overall look and feel that Concordia is aiming for within their Brand Standards Manual. The following evaluation instrument would be used in order for the editor to report on this issue:

	Yes	**No**
Design conforms to CUBe look		
Proper logo use		
Colours are appropriate		
Font is appropriate		
Spacing between elements is appropriate		
Additional Comments:		

Production Specialist's Review (HTML + CSS component)

An editor with experience in web development would be responsible for ensuring that the "back-end" programming of the web page would ensure that the page appears uniform in all browsers. They would look over the structure of the HTML and CSS files in order to ensure that all elements will be displayed properly.

	Agree	**Disagree**
HTML syntax is correct		
Additional comments:		
CSS conforms to Concordia Brand Standards Manual		
Additional comments:		
Webpage is uniform and displays properly in all browsers		
Additional comments:		
Links and other interactive elements are active and function properly		
Additional comments:		
Webpage is accessible to users with visual impairment		
Additional comments:		

Technical Review (Networking Expert)

A networking expert would be responsible for ensuring that all of the information provided in the FAQ is accurate. This includes the definition of networking, alternative approaches and resources which were consulted. There will be a general assessment of the FAQ page, in addition to a more granular assessment of each section.

	Agree	**Somewhat Agree**	**Neutral**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Disagree**
"Networking" is properly defined					
Information regarding networking is accurate					
Information regarding networking is clear					
Alternative approaches given are appropriate					
Suggested resources are appropriate					

What is networking?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

If I am networking, aren't I simply using people?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

Most of the job market is hidden? What does that mean?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

Where do I begin ?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

How do I prepare for a formal networking event?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

How do these things work?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

Anything else I should know? What happens afterwards?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

I hate informal gatherings. Any alternatives for me?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

How will making connections with my peers help me in my career ?	
Comments:	***What changes should be made?***

Additional Comments:

Usability Test

A usability test will be conducted with a single participant. They will be asked to navigate from the landing page of Concordia's website to the FAQ page. Once there, they will navigate the networking information page. During the process, the tester will use the think-aloud protocol in order to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The supervisor of the test will keep a record of the test, capturing the process with a video camera. This will enable the designers to look back upon the usability test and make the necessary adjustments.

Observer Sheet	**Yes**	**No**
User accesses FAQ with ease		
User is engaged by the material		
User navigates the page with ease		
User asks many questions and is confused		
Additional comments:		

User Sheet	**Yes**	**No**
I was able to access FAQ with ease		
The information I was looking for was easy to locate		
The information was clear		
The information was useful		
Expanding and collapsing the elements was helpful		
The page design reminds me of Concordia		
The page design is appealing and attractive to the eye		

Links provided are active and work properly		
Contact information was easy to locate		
Comments:		

Summative Evaluation Instruments

Engagement

Are users visiting the Information Page?

Analytics would be used in order to measure the amount of traffic that the page would garner. This information would be used to figure out whether or not the information is being seen.

User Satisfaction

Your opinion, Please

1. In a word, how would you describe this FAQ?

   _____

2. Using a number, how would you describe this FAQ?

1	2	3	4	5
Abysmal		Average		Outstanding

3. How much did you know about networking before visiting the FAQ ?

1	2	3	4	5
Nothing		Some		A lot

After visiting the FAQ?

1	2	3	4	5
Nothing		Some		A lot

4. How likely are you to use some or all of the information given in the FAQ?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Not sure		Very Likely

5. The best part of the FAQ was:

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. The one thing that could improve the FAQ most is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Individual Performer

Feedback on the FAQ, from Concordia University students, will help direct the information page. Receiving input from users will let us know how students are using the FAQ, and the appropriate adjustments can be made for future updates.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am more likely to use networking practices after visiting the FAQ					
I can easily consult with a department advisor given the FAQ page					
Given access to important dates, I am more likely to attend department networking events					
Given the information in the FAQ page, my perception of networking has changed					

Organizational Performance

In order to have an understanding of how graduate students have come across the FAQ, an online survey would be sent out through e-mail. This will allow Concordia to see the most effective marketing strategy for its FAQ page and allow them to properly focus their resources.

Please indicate how you have been directed to the Networking Information Page.

Check all boxes that apply.

- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ Print Media (Posters, Flyers, etc.)
- ☐ School Newspaper (The Link, The Concordian, etc.)
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Concordia University website
- ☐ E-mail

References

Carliner, S. (2015). *Training design basics*. Alexandria: ATD Press

Brand Standards Manual. (2013). Concordia University. Adopted by the Board of Governors in 2008.