

Power Up! ^[1]

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It's called Power Up!, a networking and training event for graduate students and industry within the field of marine science and technology. You should definitely come, my friend and fellow PhD student said to me over lunch.

Wow, that's incredibly specific. It's like the event was made just for us. One moment later, and I said, Send me the link. I'm going.



I'm glad I did. Power Up! lived up to my expectations, and happily exceeded them. I always feel I'm a step behind when it comes to networking, and I'm often flustered when friends and family inevitably ask the question all students dread: So, what are you going to do after you graduate??

The event was an all-day affair, free for students and completely catered. Workshops on networking, resume-building, and career-entrepreneurship filled the morning. I found the networking workshop with Ocean Networks Canada? Rick Searle to be particularly useful, since it lacked the fluff that usually attends networking workshops. It instead emphasised the real focus of networking: creating relationships and asking what you can give to others. We also had multiple chances to give our ?elevator speech? to our fellow attendees, which was helpful in preparing for the afternoon.

Lunch, deliciously catered, had an incredible guest speaker, Phil Nuytten. We all watched in awe and amazement as he detailed his life and work, starting with opening a scuba shop at age fifteen and continuing with a company building submarines and diving suits, pioneering deep-sea exploration.



Industry delegates arrived for the afternoon session. The students were put into groups of six, and the groups visited each delegate in turn, giving our elevator speeches. We were all pretty polished by the last delegate. This activity was incredibly valuable to me. The groups were small enough to fully interact with each other. The time limits for each delegate, though not long, were enough to ask questions and to start a discussion if we had an interest. There was certainly enough interaction to continue conversations into the coffee break. Cards were exchanged between interested parties, and I really had a sense that everybody there was in the same boat: eager to make connections, and sincerely interested in learning more about each other.

In the aftermath of the event, I set to work on my LinkedIn connections, and have had a number of fruitful interactions to date. It?s funny how satisfying it is to be the one connecting people together. It now seems like everyone I see on LinkedIn is at least a 2nd degree connection. My career world is shrinking, in a good way.



Speaking with the delegates has given me a much better appreciation for the different opportunities that await me when I graduate. I also have a new sense of excitement for my own work, when everyone I met was sincerely interested in what I do. It's easy to lose sight of the enthusiasm at the end of a PhD. I am reinvigorated by the fascinating things I can do in my field.

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