

Informational Interviewing 101

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Service Learning & Career Development

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- Looking for a career? You **NEED** to do an informational interview!
- Do your research about the company and the field
- Pay attention and be interested in what is being said
- Always send a thank you!

Why conduct an informational interview

One out of every 200 resumes results in a job offer. One out of every 12 informational interviews, however, results in a job offer. Informational Interviewing is the ultimate networking technique, especially considering that the purpose of informational interviewing is not to get job offers. Job offers just happen to be a delightful side benefit to the valuable practice. The Informational Interview is designed to produce information. This information will help you choose or refine a career path. You can learn how to break in and find out if you have what it takes to succeed. It is an expanded form of chatting

with your network contacts. This process of spending time with one of your network contacts in a highly focused conversation will provide you with key information you need to launch or boost your career. You accomplish several things when you go out on informational interviews.

You obtain a great deal of information about your career field and the skills needed to do that job effectively. You gain a perspective of work that goes beyond the limitations of job titles, allowing you to see not only what skills are required for the job, but how

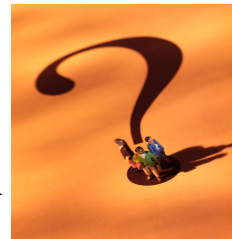
you might fit into that work setting. You have the opportunity to make personal contacts among management level personnel. You gain insight into the hidden

job market (employment opportunities that are not advertised).

You become aware of the needs of the employers and the

realities of employment.

You gain confidence in talking with people while learning what you need to know. This will expose you to a variety of jobs and personalities of companies making the search for you “niche” that much easier.



NEVER ask for a job

Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not hit them up for a job. The minute you begin trying to get a job, the

employer will feel misled. If you discover a job that you do want to apply for during the interview, wait until the informational interview is over. The next day, call the employer and tell your contact that the informational

interview not only confirmed your interest in the field, but also made you aware of a position that you would like to formally apply for.

How to approach the interview



SET UP THE INTERVIEW

Write a phone script as a guideline. Smile while you are talking on the phone. Enjoy the process. Be friendly and efficient. Confirm date, time a place of the interview. Say thank you!!

DO YOUR RESEARCH

For an informational interview to be truly effective, you can't just go into it blindly. Research will greatly enhance the quality of informational interviews. If you are informed

about the company, you'll be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions. You'll respond thoughtfully to information and any questions the interviewee might put to you. You won't ask questions that could easily have been answered by doing your homework.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Because 90 percent of all jobs are never advertised, you will uncover job openings that never make it to the newspaper

or employment office. Thus, be prepared to make a good impression and to be remembered by the employer. Dress as you would for a regular job interview.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

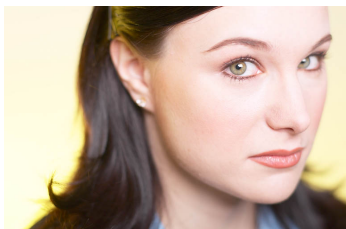
Interview starts when you walk through the door. Treat the receptionist / administration with respect and kindness. Your handshake makes an impression. Small talk is part of the interview. Body language speaks louder than words!

DO

- Be on time
- Bring extra copies of resumes
- Practice interviewing
- Study potential questions
- Be positive in questions and responses
- Respect all people in office
- Thank the interviewer
- Be straightforward
- Listen intently
- Be professional
- Follow up, on time, with everything you say you will do
- Send a thank you note

"Body language speaks louder than words".

Get the scoop—pretend to be a reporter



You don't need to write down everything, but information that you may want to remember is important. Be enthusiastic and show interest in what the interviewee is talking about. Employ an informal dialogue during the interview.

Be direct and concise with your questions and answers and do not ramble. Have good eye contact and posture at all times. Be positive in your remarks, and reflect a good sense of humor. Observe and listen for misunderstanding or confusion.

A raised eyebrow or hesitation in answer are signs of not understanding your questions. Clarify your question, restate it or redirect for understanding and appropriate answers.

Asking Questions the Right Way

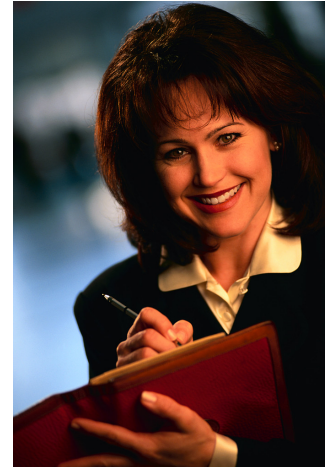
Ask open ended questions (who, what, when, where, how, and sometimes why). Who would I talk to regarding...? What would you do if...? When is a good time to begin the process of looking for a position? Where would I find more information? How did you get started in this profession? Why are there two

part-time shifts rather than on full time shift?

PROBING METHODS

The silent probe....don't jump in and start talking for the interviewee. Let them continue with the explanation. Nudging probes include: And? So? Go on.. Then what happened? Re-statement probes can clarify your true intention. *Question*

On a typical day in this position, what do you do? *Answer* In this position? I sit. *Restate question* (laughing) Are there other activities that you do? A clearing-house probe asks broad question that addresses a single issue. Is there anything else that you can tell me about your typical day?



Common Traps to Avoid

YES/ NO QUESTIONS

Do you like what you do on a typical day? *Instead ask:* How do you feel about your typical day?

Could you tell me who I could talk to next? *Instead ask:* Who do you know that I should talk to next?

DOUBLE-BARRELED QUESTIONS

Tell me about the most satisfying and challenging part of your job. *Instead ask the questions separately:* Tell me about the most satisfying part of your job. Tell me about the least satisfying part of your job.

THE LEADING PUSH

When talking to Ms. Brown, I could use your name, couldn't I? *Instead ask:* Do I have your permission to use your name when I talk with Ms. Brown?

"How do you feel about your typical day?"

Tips and Wisdom

When in an interview, ask what you want to know but also let the person talk, because you might discover information about unanticipated areas of employment. Note your reactions on an objective level, but don't ignore personal feelings; what you naturally gravitate toward or away from is very important. Find out if the interviewee has any insight

on the qualifications necessary for a position such as the one you are discussing. Talking with people doesn't have to be a formal process or one you practice only when job hunting. Chat with people casually. Since most people enjoy talking about their work, curiosity can open many doors. If you ask for 20-30 minutes of a person's time, stick to

the limit. View all information given through your own filters. Don't settle for just one or two interviews about a given area of work; a broad information base is essential. Avoid impressions about an area of work based solely on whether the person interviewed was likeable or the surroundings attractive.



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We're on the web!

<http://www.wou.edu/student/career/>

Be sure to send a thank you card or letter within one to three days after the interview. Let them know they were helpful and thank them for the time spent. As a nice touch, quote something that the resource person said back to them, word for word. Ask the person to keep you in mind if they come across any other information that may be helpful to you in your career research. Include your address and phone number under your signature.

Don't forget, our office does mock interviews!! If you want practice before you conduct your Informational Interview—or your job interview, schedule your mock interview with our office. We can help you polish your skills!

Possible Informational Interview Questions

from www.quintcareers.com

What is your job like?

A typical day?

What do you do? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?

What kinds of problems do you deal with?

What kinds of decisions do you make?

What percentage of your time is spent doing what?

How does the time use vary? Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?

How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?

How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?

Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?

What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation? What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging? What do you like and not like about working in this industry?

What things did you do before you entered this occupation? Which have been most helpful? What other jobs can you

get with the same background?

What are the various jobs in this field or organization?

Why did you decide to work for this company?

What do you like most about this company?

Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?

How does your company differ from its competitors?

Why do customers choose this company?

Are you optimistic about the company's future and your future with the company?

What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?

How does the company make use of technology for internal communication and outside marketing?

How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field or organization/

What is the best way to enter this occupation?

What are the advancement opportunities?

What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?

What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long range goals?

What are the skills that are most important for a position in this field?

What particular skills or talents are most essential to be effective in your job? How did you learn these skills? Did you enter this position through a formal training program? How can I evaluate whether or not I have the necessary skills for a position such as yours?

How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?

Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization and, if so, what is?

What can you tell me about the corporate culture?

What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold? Are there incentives or disincentives for staying in the same job?

How has your job affected your lifestyle?