

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

## What is an informational interview?

One of the best ways to research an occupation, company or field is to speak with someone who is employed in that occupation, company or field. An informational interview is just what it sounds like; it's conducting an interview to obtain information! These interviews can be very helpful, because they offer a more personalized and individualized understanding of the occupation, company or field. The information provided is usually more up-to-date, specific and reflective of what it means to be in that position.

## What do the professionals think about informational interviews?

Most professionals like them!! Professionals in their career field are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with others, especially college students, recent graduates and alumni. They are flattered that you are interested in their profession and are willing to spend time with you discussing their career path. Unlike a normal interview, you make the agenda, which means you need to be prepared!

## Steps to a successful informational interview

### Identify the occupation or industry about which you want to learn.

- Assess your interests, abilities, values and skills.
- With this information, identify the best fields to research.

### Prepare for the interview: Do your homework!

- Research the industry and company and decide what you want to learn from the experience.
- Prepare a list of questions! You want to find out the individual's perspective, observations and experiences.
- Prepare your resume, business card and 30-second speech.
- Identify who you want to interview and for what reason.

### Set-up the interview.

- Contact the person by phone, email or letter. Ask for 15-30 minutes of their time.
- Make sure you provide your name, school, major and reason for calling! For example: "Good morning (name of person). My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a sophomore Business major from Wesley College. I am considering a career in accounting. I have read about accounting and I took an accounting class this past semester, however, now I am ready to speak with professionals in the field who can provide their personal perspective. I would be interested in any information or advice you could share with me. Could we arrange a brief meeting, at your convenience?"

- Explain that you are seeking information about a particular occupation and/or career field.
- Be flexible and do not expect them to rearrange their schedule for you!
- It's not uncommon to wait weeks for an appointment or have to reschedule your appointment due to their daily demands. Don't panic!

### **Do not ask for a job!!**

- Instead of asking for a job, ask for advice. People are much more open and willing to give you time if you tell them you want to ask them a few questions about the industry, the company or their career.

### **Confirm your appointment.**

- Call the day before to confirm your appointment. Again, things come up so don't be disappointed if they have to reschedule.

### **Conduct the interview.**

- Dress professionally!
- Be on time, polite and professional.
- Use your questions and show interest in the answers.
- Be mindful of their time.

### **Send a thank-you note.**

- Don't forget to send a letter or email expressing your appreciation for their time and information!

### **Keep a networking log.**

- Keeping a networking log isn't just about storing their business cards. You should also make note of the following information:
  - Who referred them to you
  - The date you met
  - A few key points that were discussed
  - Suggestions they made
  - Names of referrals
  - The date you sent a thank-you note
  - The date you made a follow-up contact

### **Maintain your network.**

- Send a brief email or make a phone call every month or two
- Provide an update about your job search or new job
- Ask how things are going
- Don't overdo it! If you contact them too often they may get sick of you!



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