



Informational Interviews

The informational interview provides you with the opportunity to learn more about a profession or occupational field that you are interested in. Informational interviews can provide both networking opportunities and occupational information by providing potential candidates with advice on their career, employment opportunities, the industry and the corporate culture of a potential future workplace.

BENEFITS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Developing a solid understanding of a potential employer or industry is often the key to securing your desired employment opportunity. Informational interviews provide potential candidates with professional and industry information that may not otherwise be found through reading about a company alone.

KEY BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES



Opportunity to speak with experts in your field



Learn about the profession and industry



Identify gaps in your knowledge, skills and abilities, and learn about useful training/education/skill development strategies to improve



Learn about industry changes, trends and growth areas



Build your professional network



Obtain “inside” advice on the best ways to break into your field and impress potential employers



Gain insight into a day-in-the-life of professionals in your industry

Remember: Informational interviews are NOT job interviews and the objective is not to find job openings. At no stage should you ask for a position. However, the interviewee may suggest several companies and/or available positions that you may be interested in following up formally.

STEPS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

1. RESEARCH

- Conduct some initial research on the occupational field and/or organisation using more traditional strategies such as online content, print media etc.
- Identify people you may wish to interview. These can include:
 - Anyone in your network including friends, family, former employers, teachers
 - Members of professional associations
 - Alumni
 - Student groups
 - Professionals you have met at networking events
 - Individuals presently employed in positions you would like to consider for your future career
 - Access your LinkedIn Alumni network through the LinkedIn search function

2. INTRODUCTORY EMAIL OR LINKEDIN MESSAGE

- Develop a brief introduction of yourself and your hopes for the meeting
- Consider why you really want to meet with this person and use this information in your introduction.
 - For example: Do you admire their career path? Were you referred through someone who believed they were a great source of knowledge and advice? Did they make any unique or outstanding contributions to their field?
- Identify the information you hope to acquire from the meeting and clearly articulate your motivations for the meeting.
- Be considerate of the interviewee's time. You may wish to demonstrate this by offering to have a brief 15-20 minute coffee at a time most convenient for them.

3. PREPARE

- Develop a deeper understanding of your interviewee, including their role and position within the organisation. This will assist you in developing your questions as it will give you insight into what questions they may or may not be able to answer.
- Prepare your questions in advance.
- Make note of the most important questions to ask first. This will assist you in ensuring your meeting runs to time and your most important questions are answered if the meeting is cut short.
- Practice your questions in advance of the interview to demonstrate professionalism, confidence and assuredness.

4. CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

- Dress neatly and appropriately
- Be friendly and engaging throughout the interview. Clearly demonstrate that you appreciate the time the interviewee has set aside for you.
- Remember to smile, shake hands firmly at the start and end of the interview and maintain proper eye contact.
 - Practicing your questions and interview skills in advance will assist you develop your confidence.
- Be a few minutes early
- Introduce yourself and restate your motivations for the interview.
 - For example: You may be hoping to learn more about the career options available in your chosen field.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Be prepared to direct the flow of the conversation in a polite and respectful manner.

- Ask for the permission of the interviewee to take notes.
- Where appropriate, you may wish to request referrals .
- Respect the time provided by your interviewee. Ensure the meeting sticks to the time limit unless suggested to do so otherwise by the interviewee.
- Thank your interviewee for their time.
- Ask for their permission if you wish to follow up at a later date with further questions that may arise.

5. FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW

- Thank your interviewee for their time. Send a thank you email/message within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for their time and the information that was kindly provided by them.
- Immediately after the interview, make a record of:
 - Everything you have learned
 - Your impressions of the occupation/profession and how they fit alongside your values, skills and/or interests
 - What more you would like to know
- This relationship could become part of your professional network. It may be a beneficial idea to keep in touch with your interviewee, particularly if you had a pleasant interaction, and inform them about if you followed up on the advice they provided you with, and how things are going as a result
 - For example: If you received knowledge or advice on gaining specific work experience, you may wish to notify them if you were able to gain entry into a vocation or graduate training program as a result.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

To assist you in developing and creating your list of interview questions, you may wish to also include some of the examples presented below:

 <i>How did you initially get started in this organisation/profession?</i>	 <i>Do you find most tasks are performed alone or in a team environment?</i>
 <i>What jobs/tasks/roles do you find yourself engaging in most on a daily basis?</i>	 <i>How are your achievements recognised within this organisation/profession?</i>
 <i>Can you tell me a little about what the corporate culture/ atmosphere is like within this organisation?</i>	 <i>From your perspective, what do you believe I should focus on improving or directing my efforts towards, for me to meet my career goals?</i>
 <i>Is this a highly competitive industry to break into?</i>	 <i>What advice would you provide to someone looking for an entry level position/internship within this company?</i>
 <i>What skills are the most useful for this organisation/profession/position?</i>	 <i>What do you find most challenging/frustrating/rewarding about your job?</i>



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