

Informational Interviews for Job Search

A common way for people to gather information about various careers by talking to professionals in the field.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Informational Interviews can help you:

- Find out about different positions in a certain industry
- Get a sense of the job market in your field of interest
- Make connections with a professional in your industry at a specific organization
- Find out insider information about a specific organization or company to make sure it's a good match for you, and to set you up for any future interviews there.

They are not so scary because:

- People enjoy giving advice and love to share their stories
- They've been in your shoes before
- The worst thing that could happen is that a person you ask is too busy to meet with you, or they don't return your call/email.

WHICH COMPANY DO YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT?

BRAINSTORM YOUR NETWORK

1. Family and friends
2. Coworkers or supervisors from current or previous jobs or volunteer opportunities
3. Advisors and Professors
4. Clubs, organizations or community service groups
5. Bottom Line Go Far Volunteers

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Tips on business communication via email:

- Keep your messages short, this will ensure your message doesn't get lost in unnecessary details
- Use a typeface and formatting that is easy to read
- Made the subject line descriptive
- Do not use emoticons
- Do not attach your resume to a request letter
- Re-read the email before sending it; check the message tone and ensure that it is **error-free**

Example 1: A message to someone you have been referred to:

Subject: Request for an Informational Interview

Good afternoon Dr. Singh,

My name is Helen Cho and I'm a student at Northeastern University. I'm in the process of researching careers I might want to pursue when I graduate, and one of the paths I'm exploring is biochemistry research. My professor Margaret Reynolds said you would be a great person to talk to since you have been working in this field for over 10 years. I was wondering if we could set up a 30-minute meeting sometime next week so I can learn more about what you do and how you got to be in your position. I can be reached by email or by phone at 617-989-9555.

Thanks so much for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sincerely,
Helen Cho*

Example 2: A message to your academic advisor

Subject: Informational Interview

Hi Mr. Katzinburger,

Thanks again for helping me choose my courses for next semester. I'd like to schedule a time to come in and talk with you about careers in Engineering. I know this is something you know a lot about, and I'd be interested to hear what paths other students have taken and what internship opportunities might be available to me. Please let me know what times you are available to meet.

*Thank you,
Hakim Shafar*

Example 3: A message to someone you haven't met before

Subject: Gray Matter Blog inspires request

Dear Mr. Brown,

I've been reading your Gray Matter Blog since you began writing it 3 years ago. Your insights on accelerating brand potential have influenced my point of view on the role of social media in the branding process.

In my internship last summer with Big Social Marketing Firm, I researched and wrote media POVs and used Nielsen software to assess and interpret media data. Your spin on the impact of this data has informed my tweets (give Twitter address here) and my own blog (give blog address here).

Any chance to talk with you about the work you do at Gray Matter Advertising would be extremely welcome. Even 10 minutes would be invaluable.

Thank you for considering my request, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Your Name

Email

URL (blog, twitter)

Example 4: Designed so that you can fill in with your own info

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a student at _____ College/University. _____ gave me your name and suggested that I contact you. I am in the process of making some decisions about my future. I'm interested in _____ and am hoping that you have a few minutes to talk with me about careers in this area. Would it be possible to set up an informational interview? I hope we can meet in person or have a short conversation over the phone sometime in the next few weeks.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

STEP 5: PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

What you ask all depends on what you want to know. Asking open ended questions may help you get more information. Brainstorm a list of questions you'd like to ask:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Here are some more ideas of questions you could ask during your informational interview:

Career path-how their career path lead them to this point

- How did you get your present job?
- Can you tell me about typical entry level opportunities in this field?

Preparation-what skills/expertise are needed?

- What advice would you give to someone starting in this field?
- Are there any professional organizations you recommend I join?
- When job hunting in this field are there any strategies that work best?

Company/Industry-what's it like to work here?

- What kind of entry level positions are offered to recent grads?
- How do you describe the corporate culture at your organization?
- How does your organization differ from its competitors?

Final question:

- Is there anyone else you can recommend I speak with for additional information?

STEP 6: MAINTAIN YOUR NETWORK

Say thank you! - Send a thank you card or email referencing some top points you took from the conversation, and if they referred you to someone else mention that as well.

Example Thank you Email

Dear Mrs. Tabloy,

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me yesterday. I really enjoyed our discussion, and it was valuable for me to learn about your career path and more about _____ corporation. It really confirmed that I want to pursue marketing there, and am excited to apply for any open entry level positions! If you hear of any positions that good fit for me, please let me know. I look forward to keeping touch.

*Thanks again,
Anne Holloway*

Follow up - Connect to the professional on LinkedIn so that you can keep in touch with them. If you do take a job in their field let them know and they will remain a contact or could possibly mentor you. If you are looking for a position also let them know! They may hear of a position they can send to you in their company or their contacts companies before anyone else sees it on the job boards in the future.