

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Part of researching job opportunities is to conduct informational interviews. Informational interviews help you to:

- Find out whether jobs are available in the profession or industry that you want to enter.
- Find out more about organizations where you may want to work.
- Learn what the industry or organization values.
- Evaluate how your values, interests and skills fit with a particular profession or industry.

Informational interviews are not job interviews. However, they are a good opportunity to get additional leads and referrals that will help tap the "hidden job market" even when there are no current job openings.

Contacting people to interview

The first step is identifying people to interview. Ask your friends and families for names of people who work in the profession that you are hoping to enter. You may have names from previously conducted interviews.

Setting up the interview

- Introduce yourself and why you are calling.
- Indicate where you got the person's name.
- Ask if the person would be available for a short meeting to discuss his or her occupation.

You also want to explain a little about your own background and why their occupation appeals to you. Be sure that they do not get the impression that you are asking for a job. Remember, you are not asking for a job.



Preparing for the interview

To make best use of your interview time, know in advance what questions you are going to ask. For example, you might want to ask:

- What is a day on this job really like?
- What do you like about your job? Dislike?
- Is your job typical of others in this field?
- What's the corporate culture like here? (Hours, salary, titles)
- Which firms do you think are your toughest competitors, and how do they differ from your company?
- How did you get into this field?
- How do you stay current in your knowledge?
- What kind of experience or training is required?
- What are employers looking for? (Skills, education, experience)
- May I have a copy of a job description?
- What is the potential for advancement?
- What are current job prospects like?
- Are there related fields I might want to look into if few jobs are available in my primary career goal?
- What are additional ways to learn about jobs in this field?
- Can you refer me to someone else in this field?

Bring a copy of your resume in case you have the opportunity to have it critiqued or to leave it with the person you interview.

Conducting the interview

The person with whom you are meeting might be a valuable contact. So, even though this is not a job interview, you want to make a good impression. Brush up on interviewing skills. Tips to keep in mind include:

- Dress professionally.
- Be yourself, authentic and confident.
- Be prepared to talk about yourself.
- Look for an opportunity to talk about your resume.
- Take notes.
- Stick to the time limit that you agreed on when you set up the interview.
- Recognize others; always speak positively.
- Be trustworthy.
- Generously share your network.
- Ask for names of other people to contact.
- Ask for a business card for your records.
- Thank the person for taking the time to meet with you.

Following up

Don't forget to send a thank-you note as part of your interview follow-up. The business card will contain the information you need to be sure the note gets delivered.

Be generous to others; Networking is a give and get.

