

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

One of the most effective ways to gather relevant and up to date information about an industry or profession you're interested in is by conducting informational interviews. What exactly are informational interviews? They are approximately 20-30-minute meetings in which you sit down with a professional in an industry/profession of interest to you to learn about their experience in the field, as well as their perspective on the industry. What better way to gather information about an industry than by talking to someone who is directly in it? Here are some tips on requesting, preparing, and conducting an informational interview.

Identifying Who You'd Like to Speak to and Requesting an Information Interview

- Create a list of warm connections in the industry as a starting point. If you don't know anyone that works in the field, utilize your connections and LinkedIn contacts to see if you have any 2nd degree connections in the field.
- If you send an email, remember to mention how you received their contact information and that you would like to set up a time to talk to them about their career path and careers in their industry. Provide your contact information and tell them that you hope to hear from them soon.
- If you are phoning your contact, prepare a short script:
 - Example: "Hello, my name is "blank". "Blank" suggested you may be able to help me as I am interested in a career in your field. I am looking to find information regarding that field and particularly the role as you experience it. Would it be possible to arrange a time where we could get together to discuss this? Thank you, I look forward to your response."

Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Research the company, industry, and individual before the interview
- Prepare a list of 8-10 questions you have formed based on your research and place them in the order of importance to you. Ideas include:
 - How would you describe your career path to get to this point?
 - Are there specific skills that you believe are most important in this role?
 - What are the most challenging aspects of this position?
 - What advice would you give me, knowing I am interested in this field?
 - Does this position look different depending on the company?
- Be sure to structure your questions around what you've learned through research, and keep in mind the questions will change with each informational interview you conduct as you build your knowledge of the position
- Conduct the informational interviews beginning with the company you do NOT wish to work with first, and the company you DO wish to work with last
- Dress as you would for a job interview. Professionally.

- Take an updated resume just in case it is requested. It can be presented at the end of the meeting by asking if there are any tips on things that could be added to your resume to make you a strong candidate to apply in the future. Do NOT ask for a job! That is not the purpose of the meeting.

During and After the Informational Interview

- Arrive 10 – 15 minutes before your appointment
- Be prepared to initiate the conversation
- Listen more than you speak. This is an opportunity for you to gather information, not pitch yourself.
- Keep an eye on the time and be sure to bring the meeting to an end at the time you had requested even if you haven't asked all of your questions.
- Ask if they have any other recommendations of people with whom you could speak
- Do NOT ask for a job! Informational interviews are for gathering information only
- Take notes
- Ask for a business card. Keep a record of all your contacts
- Send a hand-written thank-you card after the meeting

Remember that it is important to make a favorable impression; you never know how this person may help you in the future.