

Informational Interviews- Tips and Sample Questions

The key to making a strong and favourable impression for any informational interview is formulating questions that are **relevant, tailored and asked with a genuine interest to learn more**. It's important not to have expectations that a connection will be given nor to ask for a job, rather, the goal is purely information. Done well, informational interviews can be motivating, effective, insightful & fun!

When choosing what to ask, consider not only the industry and company - but the position that contact holds within the company, so that they are more likely to be able to give you information that will propel your job search forward. Preparing thoughtful questions that stimulates an interesting and enjoyable conversation will create a positive impression and make it that much easier when you ask **your final question of "do you have any recommendations of who I should speak to next?"**

Some recommended topics areas:

1. **Company Knowledge-** *getting an insider's point of view of a company's workplace culture, their hiring practices and the realities of working there day to day.*
2. **Industry Knowledge-** *learning where the new opportunities are arising in your field and where could you could be better targeting your job search.*
3. **Career Path-** *you are interested in figuring out how this person got to where there are today- what insights can they highlight to you?*

By preparing 8-10 questions and being flexible to what arises in the conversation, you can professionally guide a meeting in a manner that can be greatly valuable to your job search.

Company Knowledge

- Can you tell me a bit about the on-boarding and training process for new hires?
- From your experience- have you been well trained in your role? What kind of employee training have you received as your role progresses to keep you effective and current?
- Does your company provide any mentorship and/or coaching – be it a formal program or simply a culture of learning and mentorship that is more informal?
- What can you tell me about this companies' recruitment process? Can you share a bit about how you were hired?
- How many people work in your department/ organization/ in roles similar to my job goal?
- How often do new opportunities arise in the area of my job goal within your company?
- I am looking for a company that I can grow with – does your company value internal hiring and promotion and long-term employee investment? How do they demonstrate this?
- How would you describe the company culture? How do the leadership/ management teams help support this experience for their employees?
- Aside from the essential hard skills, what are some of the soft skills your company looks for in exceptional hires?
- What are some of the key areas of growth for your company at present?
- What made you choose this company and more importantly, what makes you stay?

Industry Knowledge

- What associations would you recommend that I join that you believe are key to our field?
- Do you belong to any great LinkedIn groups that you would advise I join?
- I want to demonstrate my interest and commitment to our industry through finding some leadership opportunities within our key associations/ organizations- do you know of any roles or of where/with whom I could look for such positions?
- Are there some interesting conferences and/or networking events on the horizon that you plan to attend?
- Do you subscribe to any Industry-related magazines, podcasts, newsletters that you would recommend to me to stay current on topical issues in the field?
- Do you know of any areas of development in our industry that will likely translate into employment?
- Do you know of any great employers I could target in my research that will likely see opportunities within our Industry in the near future?
- What are some skills/traits that successful people in this field have that I could work to develop further?
- I've had some feedback from my Career Specialist on my resume and portfolio pieces, would you be able to give me any insights of key things hiring managers in our field look for in resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn that I may not have included?
- Are there any key software/ programs/tools/ models that are new in the Industry that I should be familiarizing myself with during my job search?

Career Path

- Considering my level of experience, do you have any advice on the types of positions I could be applying for that perhaps I've not yet considered?
- What are the job titles you would recommend I target in my job search?
- Is International and/or out of province work helpful to gaining leadership in our field?
- If you were in my position, what would be your #1 recommendation for streamlining my job search to be as effective and efficient as possible within our industry?
- Are there jobs or companies in our industry that are often over-looked by new grads?
- Is association involvement key to success in our industry? Which groups have held the most value for your own learning and development?
- Are there particular courses or programs that you would recommend I take in the coming year(s) to achieve my career goals longer term?
- Would you recommend I get a career mentor to optimize my career development? Have you been mentored and how did you meet that person?
- Do you find it important to network outside of work in our industry?
- Do you follow any particular blogs/ newsletters/ twitter feeds that help give you fresh insights to your work?
- What do you find most rewarding about working in this field/ type of work?
- Are there certain courses or certification you yourself plan to take in the coming year(s) to keep and improve your own edge in the field?