

# Informational Interviewing

Market yourself in the job search by presenting yourself professionally  
Throughout the interview process.



## THE OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

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# Informational Interviewing

## What exactly is an Informational Interview?

An Informational Interview is first, a method of career exploration, and second, a way of discovering jobs that are not publicly advertised. Think of this type of interview as a conversation you have with a professional who can help you gain information about career options or employment. Establishing such a contact can assist you with building rapport with professionals in your field. It's **not** job interviewing - it's a network-building, information-gathering phase of a thorough job search.

## Who are my networking contacts? (Refer to *Are You Networking?* for additional contacts!)

- Former employers and customers; current employers and customers if you are being open about your search
- Alumni, faculty members, advisors to student organizations, professional organizations
- Family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, members of church or volunteer groups
- People who consider you a "personal professional contact" - doctor, accountant, insurance dealer, financial advisor, etc.

## REMEMBER! It's not only who you know, it's who they know!

## How do I ask for an Informational Interview?

Here's an example of a telephone opening script to practice before reaching your contacts:

"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I was given your name by \_\_\_\_\_ or found your company through \_\_\_\_\_. Currently I am arranging informational interviews in my field of interest and I would like to meet with you if possible. I understand you are busy and I would only ask for about 15 minutes of your time."

## How should I prepare for an Informational Interview?

- Dress in professional attire. Be punctual! A professional demeanor and attitude is key!
- Research the contact's employer via company website and/or other resources - see "**How Do I Research Companies?**" - so that you can form a knowledge base from which to ask questions. Don't waste their time; be prepared!
- Know yourself! Evaluate your interests, personality, and skills. The more you know yourself, the better prepared you will appear in the informational interview, PLUS the more likely you'll be able to assess whether the career would be enjoyable and rewarding to YOU! To do this:
  - ◊ Access **SIGI 3**, under **Map Your Career**, under **Career Exploration**, of the Career Services web site and complete the **Assessments** section. Or, schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor for the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** personality inventory, and/or the **COPS Interest Inventory**, to assist you in clarifying work-related personality strengths, preferred work environments, teamwork and leadership styles, and interests.
- Know your goals! What are you hoping to discover from this informational interview? DEVELOP A LIST OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK, and bring these questions with you to the interview! Gather information that will assist you in making informed career decisions - that's your goal!

## What types of questions could I ask my contacts?

- How did you choose this career? How did you get this job?
- Describe a typical day on the job. Describe a typical week.
- What is the most interesting or rewarding aspect of your job? Greatest challenge, or most dissatisfying aspect?
- What types of education or training are needed for entering this field? What are the opportunities for advancement?
- What personality characteristics are needed to perform this job?
- Describe the amount of independence you have, and supervision you receive, in this job.
- How is the reality of your job different from what you expected when you started your career?
- What advice would you give to someone considering this type of career?
- Can you suggest anyone else whom it would be helpful to speak with?

NOTE: You may ask the contact if you can provide him/her with a copy of your resume as a means to share your knowledge and skills to additional professionals who may be interested in your qualifications.

## What's next?

- Once you leave an informational interview, **your impressions** at that moment are very valuable for learning. Take notes, and ask yourself the following questions:
  - ◊ What did I find most interesting about this job? Was there anything in particular I didn't like?
  - ◊ What were my impressions of the way they feel about their work?
  - ◊ How did this person become successful?
  - ◊ What key point or advice were provided about my career exploration, and where I could get more information?
  - ◊ What's the next step? Anyone to contact?
- **Follow-up with the contact!** Promptly send them a "thank you" note thanking them for their time. See **Post-Interview** section of Career Services website for assistance in writing a thank you note! And, always keep track of your contacts!