

Informational Interviews

How to Arrange and Facilitate an Informational Interview

Informational interviews are a crucial and often overlooked aspect of networking. They are one of the best ways to find out about a job and make a contact. Here are the most important steps in the process:

- Call, write, or email the person you want to meet, and emphasize that you are researching or seeking advice about an industry or position.
- Set up a meeting and prepare questions.
- Research the business you are curious about *before* the meeting. Do not waste your contact's time.
- Send your contact a thank you note, and follow up when you have news or other relevant information, such as an article that the contact might enjoy.

Research, Research, Research

This aspect of interview preparation cannot be overemphasized: **Do your homework.** Research your contact, the company, and the industry. There are a variety of ways to do this:

- Public library (books, periodicals, magazines, trade journals, etc.);
- Literature from company's public relations department; call and explain that you have a scheduled meeting and would like background information;
- Annual reports;
- The Internet and other sources of electronic information like Lexis-Nexis; be sure to check out the company's Web site.

Become familiar with the organization's products, structure, services, financial status, competitors, reputation and any recent major changes. In addition, gather information about the person whom you will meet -- background, style, education, affiliations and their hot button issues.

Questions You May Want to Ask

What do you do in a typical day?

What are the most interesting aspects of your job?

What were the jobs you had that led to your present position?

How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this career path?

What is the next step in your career path?

What are the required qualifications and training for entry-level positions in this field?

Are there specific courses a student should take to be qualified to work in this field?

What are the entry-level jobs in this field?

What types of training are provided to persons entering this field?

What are the salary ranges typically offered to entry-level candidates for positions in this field?

What special advice would you give a person entering this field?

How do you see this field changing in the future?

Do you have any information on job specifications and descriptions that I may have?

What related occupational fields would you suggest I explore?

Who else would you suggest I talk to, both in your organization and in other organizations?

Questions You Might Be Asked

What are your career goals? What are your short-term goals? What are your long-term goals?

What do you know about his organization or field?

What coursework have you taken related to your career goals?

What contributions have you made to previous employers?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?