

# How Not to Blow an Informational Interview

Are you a person whose requests for informational interviews have gone unanswered? Chris Perry, who blogs about the job hunt and personal branding at Career Rocketeer, thinks he knows why.

As Perry wisely wrote in his blog post “They know you want a job, so don’t ask for one!” chances are you’re going about this all wrong.

I recently spoke with Perry, a recent MBA grad who now works as an assistant brand manager in Parsippany, N.J., about the high response rate his requests for informational interviews yielded last year—despite the recession. Perry says these are the biggest mistakes made by people seeking informational interviews:

**Making it all about you.** Asking a stranger to review your resume, introduce you to the head of HR, or let you know if he or she hears of any job openings is the kiss of death. Instead, say you’re interested in the company and that you would like to speak to the person about the corporate culture and his or her career with the firm.

**Disregard their time.** You may have room in your schedule for a leisurely hour-long lunch, but most busy employees can’t devote this kind of time to someone they just met online. Make it easy for the person with whom you wish to speak to accommodate you: suggest a 15 minute phone call. As Perry points out, most people will keep talking for 30 minutes if they have more to say.

**Making them hunt for relevant details about you.** In the interest of respecting people’s time, you’ll want to keep your informational-interview request short and to the point. But that doesn’t mean you should leave them guessing about the key details of who you are, how they can reach you, and where they can learn more about you (via your LinkedIn profile, your professional blog or another website).

**Throwing grammar, courtesy and professionalism to the wind.** Nothing says “Delete this e-mail!” faster than a message riddled with typos, test-message-speak or a sense of entitlement. Proofread your messages, have friends you trust check your work and remember to express your appreciation and gratitude.