

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Informational interviewing is a method of career research and a way of discovering jobs that are not publicly advertised. It is widely acknowledged that informational interviewing is a successful technique to uncover at least 50 percent of the job market. The result of informational interviewing is finding out what you could do to earn an income that best suits you at this time in your career or working life.

Remember that an information interview is a process of talking with someone in an informal way about his or her work. It is not an interview!

Why do informational interviews?

- Build your confidence for job interviews.
- Expand YOUR job market information.
- Become a more impressive job candidate by doing your professional homework.
- Discover the titles of your ideal jobs so you can build your future toward a clear goal.
- Find out about jobs and career paths you did not know existed.
- Give potential employers a chance to meet you at your best.
- Clarify the weakness in your education, skills base and personal development. Areas for choice and growth will become apparent to you so you can change or accept them.
- Deepen your understanding of the world of work in a variety of settings.
- Have first-hand current information, rather than data from printed material about the company researched years ago.
- Establish and/or expand your professional network and facilitate additional leads.

How do I set up an informational interview?

You may get good ideas from people to contact through your faculty, your friends and family, and the Career Center of Olympic College. Don't be afraid to assert yourself. Employers like enthusiastic and motivated students. Once you have determined what employers are good candidates for informational interviewing, you are ready to call to ask for an appointment. Make it very clear that you are a student looking for information to help you make career decisions and not applying for a job. Informational interviewing is a perfectly acceptable way to learn more about careers and you will find most professionals are very receptive when you contact them to ask about their jobs.

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The Goal:

- To gain information about a company, occupation, or field of interest.
- To be remembered, because many jobs come up days and weeks after you have visited the company.
- To be referred, because 80% of the jobs are in the “hidden job market,” among people who refer people to one another all the time.

- First, assume that most people in responsible positions **WILL BE WILLING** to talk with others interested in them, their jobs, or firm.

- Be sure he or she **UNDERSTANDS YOUR TRUE SITUATION**: you are exploring career changes, or you are looking for a job, and available, not doing a leisurely survey, but you are not asking him/her for a job.

- Talk about **YOUR SKILLS**:

- Know what your strengths are in order to effectively sell your skills and abilities.

- **PREPARE** adequately:

- Know the organization as well as possible before your interview; present your best self, not your limitations.

- Get your contact **INVOLVED** with you: one of five you see will be permanently interested in assisting you. To those who are interested, report back and visit occasionally.

- **YOUR AGENDA**, in order of priority, is:

- To turn it into a job interview, or an invitation to one, if possible.
- To be referred to other executives who have jobs now.
- To get other informational interviews, increase your contacts.
- To be remembered for your skills and abilities, so that you would be thought of when a job does come up.

- Write a **THANK-YOU LETTER** after every interview within 24 hours.

The main goal is to express appreciation for the other person’s willingness to commit time to you in a business transaction.

- **SUGGESTIONS**:

- Always bring a resume along.
- Never presume he or she has read it.
- Remember your agenda.
- Never turn down a job; ask for time to think about it.

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Following are examples of questions to ask your contacts

Select approximately ten questions to ask from the following list. Phrase each question in a way that is comfortable for you. Have additional questions ready if time allows. Try to keep within the appointment time that you set, but follow the lead of the supervisor if he/she seems to want to talk longer.

Job Description

- In the position you hold now, what are your major duties and responsibilities?
- What might a typical day be like?
- What aspects of your work do you find the most interesting?
- What aspects do you enjoy the least?
- With what people in your organization (superiors, subordinates, peers) do you find you have the most contact?
- How does your position fit into the organizational structure?
- What changes do you see occurring in this field?
- Is there a rapidly changing technology in this field? (e.g., voice recognition program will impact the court reporting and transcription careers)

Career Path

- What were the positions you had which led to this one?
- What are the typical entry-level jobs in this field?
- What positions could someone in this field pursue for career advancement?
- How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this field?
- Are there any specifically defined prerequisites for advancement? (Examinations, years in service, higher degree, etc.)
- To what other areas in the field may people in it be transferred?

Preparation

- What specific qualifications are needed to be competitive for this field?
- What are the academic and experiential requirements for entry-level jobs?
- Are there any courses that would be particularly beneficial?
- Are there any extra-curricular or other experiences (work, volunteering, internships, etc.) that enhance my chances of employment?
- What special advice would you give to a person entering this field?
- What types of training do companies give people entering this field?

General

- Is there currently a demand for people in this field?
- What are the salary ranges for people in this field?
- How many hours a week does someone typically work in this field?
- May I read the job descriptions and specifications for some positions?
- Could you critique my resume?
- Are there any other people in this field that you suggest I talk to?