

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Informational interviewing is a very effective way to learn more about any industry or field while expanding your professional network at the same time. It's a short meet-up between you and somebody in your field or in the field you are considering as a career.

The purpose of the interview for you is to connect and learn. It's not about asking for a job. Generally, you take the lead in the informational interview so prepare to ask the questions and learn as much as you can about your interviewee's occupation, company, industry, etc. People are usually happy to offer career advice and even refer you to people they know who might be hiring.

LOCATE PEOPLE

Reach out to your friends, family members, and advocates. Ask them if they know someone in your desired field or a related one. Make a list of everyone in your network (if you're active on LinkedIn, that list is just a click away). Include former colleagues, friends of friends, alumni contacts, recruiters and acquaintances.

INITIAL CONTACT

Through an email, introduce yourself and explain how you got the referral (*"Our mutual friend, Karen Johnson, suggested that I contact you..."*).

Request a brief meeting to ask the person's advice about career opportunities in the industry (*"I have been working in development for nonprofit organizations for the last three years and am currently looking for my next opportunity. I would love to hear your advice on areas to explore."*)

THE INTERVIEW

Decide ahead of time what kinds of questions you want to ask. Common topics often include job titles, work responsibilities, skills required, industry problems, salary ranges, career ladders, work environments, and recruiting processes.

- What is involved in a typical day on your job?
- How did you get into this position/field?
- What important developments are occurring in this field?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants to do this kind of work?
- What are job titles for entry-level positions? Salary ranges?
- Could you refer me to someone else knowledgeable in the field?

Be on time. Dress as if you worked in that setting. Stay on topic and try to end within the agreed time limit. Remember to ask for referrals to other people in the field – you are creating your professional network.

FOLLOW-UP

Write a personal thank-you note to everyone you talk to. This is a good opportunity to thank them for their time, to restate briefly what was most helpful to you and state that you would like to keep in touch.

Example thank-you note on next page.

EXAMPLE THANK-YOU NOTE:

Dear Roberto,

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today to discuss my job search. Your advice was incredibly helpful and I have already signed up for the International Marketers Network that you recommended.

Thank you also for encouraging me to contact your friends Kim and Edward. It would be great to speak with them even if there is no opening in their group right now.

I really appreciate your help. If there is anything I can do to help you, please do not hesitate to ask.

I hope to see you at an upcoming meeting of the International Marketers' Network or at Judy's next gathering.

Best Regards,

Brad Fisher

Finally, stay in touch with your network contacts. You may also consider requesting to connect via LinkedIn. If you send an invitation, include a personal note reminding the person of who you are.

Keep your network of contacts informed of your progress. Write or email them briefly to tell them that you've contacted the people they recommended, that you have learned something new, that you have changed your direction or job target, etc and let them know if you got a job or internship!

Adapted from Big Interview



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