



Informational Interview

Information interviewing is essential to your personal growth and development. This approach to researching careers provides important benefits.

1. Exploring particular industries, companies or careers.
2. Networking with professionals that you might associate with for years to come.

Information interviewing is not about getting a job. You should never ask the target individual for a job or even a job interview. You are simply asking for the opportunity to learn from them (and perhaps they will learn from you, too.) This is the definition of networking.

Here are some of the questions that you might ask:

1. How long have you held your present position? How did you choose this particular field?
2. What other areas have you been in over the years? If you have changed, what led to the changes?
3. What type of formal training, if any, have you had? Has it been relevant to what you're doing? What type of training is now required for the field?
4. What other experiences have you had that were helpful to you?
5. What do you like best about your present position? What do you like?
6. Could you briefly describe an average day's activities?
7. What advice would you have for someone just thinking of entering your field today?
8. What other things beyond your job are you involved with that are a source of satisfaction to you?
9. As you look back on your life, does it seem to make sense that you're doing what you're doing now?

At the end of the visit, these are strong concluding statements:

- "I'll send an email (or a letter) to follow-up." (Send it in order to say thank you.)

- “Who else comes to mind that I should speak with?” (Build your network.)
- “I plan to attend the upcoming (____) conference. If you’re attending, I hope I see you there.”
- “I’ll send you a Linked In invite. What on-line groups or associations should I join?”

Warming the cold call

‘Cold calling’ or calling someone you don’t know and making a request for information is difficult. You might find yourself thinking:

- “I don’t want to say or do the wrong thing.”
- “I don’t want to impose.”
- “I don’t want to be rejected.”

Manage any anxiety you feel. While you cannot control the target individual’s response to your request, you can use the following ways to ‘ramp up’ to the task:

- Identify/research the individual and/or the company:
 - Use LinkedIn.com to learn their background, see what groups to which they belong, and review their achievements.
- Send them a introduction
 - Write an email
 - Mail a written letter to their business
 State your purpose in learning about them and their occupation/career

"Hello, my name is (NAME). I am a student or alumni from Northeastern Illinois University. I saw your profile on LinkedIn or Your company really stands out in the industry because (REASON) and I'm looking for information on your field. So I'm wondering if you would have 20 minutes to meet with me to talk about your career? I'll follow up by telephone tomorrow."

- When calling to follow-up on your email, do 3 or 4 individuals consecutively. This is called “call bursting” and makes it easier to start and complete the task. The first call is the hardest.
- Try to earn a face-to-face meeting, away from their office. Without distractions, they will remember you better and answer your questions more thoughtfully. Be prepared to offer several options for ‘when’ and ‘where’ to meet. Be flexible about meeting them before or after their workday, or at lunch. Don’t wait for them to identify where to meet. Locate a nearby McDonalds or Starbucks and offer to buy a coffee for them.

- Read through the information interview questions that you will use. Locate hundreds: Google *information interviewing*. Bring the questions with you, if you need it.
- Visualize your interaction under different scenarios. Imagine how your first call or visit to them might go. Be prepared for a brief call. Imagine other ways your communication with them might proceed. Then you won't be surprised or discouraged.