

**WHO TO CONTACT**

Students are often intimidated by trying to find people with whom to request an informational interview. Start with people who you are more comfortable with such as relatives, friends of your family, your roommate's parents, etc. and then graduate to referrals from professors, alumni, and professionals in local organizations. As you decide among professionals, you may want to look for someone who:

- Shares with you an academic major or interest, enthusiasm or involvement in some activity or lifestyle that appeals to you.
- Works in a setting you like
- Works in career areas you're interested in
- Work in specific jobs in specific organizations
- Attended graduate school, if you are considering doing so
- Graduated recently, if you'd like to talk about the transition from college to career

**HOW TO PREPARE**

Remember, people are interested in talking to people about what they do, how they do it and how they got there. But, don't waste their time or your time... be prepared!

Read a bit about the career area and organization in which the person you'll be interviewing is engaged. Know exactly what kinds of information you want by having a list of questions in mind. You can also check the Internet for any web sites associated with the organization or career field in which you're interested. Use the following list of questions to help in formulating your own.

**POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

**Of course, the questions asked may be different if you are a first-year student exploring possibilities than if you are a senior beginning a focused job search. But here are some ideas to get you started.**

**(Background)** Tell me how you got started in this field. What educational background or related experience might be helpful in entering this field?

**(Work Environment)** What are the daily duties of the job? What are the working conditions? What skills/abilities are utilized in this work?

**(Problems)** What are the toughest problems you deal with? What problem does the organization as a whole have? What is being done to solve these problems?

**(Life Style)** What obligation does your work put on you outside of the workweek? How much flexibility do you have in terms of dress, work hours, vacations?

**(Rewards)** What do you find most rewarding about this work, besides the money?

**(Salary)** What salary level would a new person start with? What are the fringe benefits? What are other forms of compensation? (bonuses, commissions, securities.)

**(Potential)** Where do you see yourself going in a few years? What are your long-term goals?

**(Promotional)** Is turnover high? How does one move from position to position? Do people normally move to another company/division/agency? What is your policy about promotions from within? What happened to the person(s) who last held this position? How many have held this job in the last 5 years? How are employees evaluated?

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**(The Industry)** What trends do you see for this industry in the next 3-5 years? What kind of future do you see for this organization?

**(Advice)** How well-suited is my background for this field? When the time comes, how would I go about finding a job in this field? What experience, paid or volunteer, would you recommend? What suggestions do you have to help make my resume more effective?

**(Demand)** What types of employers hire people in this line of work? Where are they located? What other career areas do you feel are related to your work?

**(Hiring Decision)** What are the most important factors used to hire people in this work (education, past experience, personality, special skills.)

**(Job Market)** How do people find out about your jobs? Are they advertised online (which sites other than yours?) by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word?) by Human Resources?

**(Referral to Other Information Opportunities)** Can you name a relevant trade journal or website you would recommend I view? What professional organizations might have information about this career area?

**(Referral to Others)** Based on our conversation today, what other types of people do you believe I should talk to? Can you name a few of these people? May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?

Do you have any other advice for me?

Other questions you want to ask.

### **TIPS FOR HANDLING AN IN-PERSON INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

- Do not exceed your requested time, but be prepared to stay longer in case the person indicated a willingness to talk longer.
- Dress professionally.
- Get to your appointment a few minutes early and be courteous to everyone that you meet- secretary, receptionist, etc.
- Take the initiative in the conversation. The interview is in your ball park. Try to ask open-minded questions which promote a discussion. (How...? Why...?)
- Once inside the organization, look around. What kind of working environment is there- dress style, communication patterns, sense of humor, etc? Is this a place you would want to work?

### **FOLLOW-UP**

Follow-up with a thank you note. You might thank them for their time and interest as well as cite your conclusions/decisions resulting from the interview.

Keep in touch! After you have had an in-depth conversation, consider sending a connection request through LinkedIn to stay in touch

### **SUMMARY**

After doing several informational interviews you will be more informed. You will be able to make better decisions which are based on accurate, current information.

- If you were trying to choose a major, you are now more familiar with various career paths a major might lead to. You also may have learned numerous methods to prepare for a particular career, not only through academic majors, but also work experience and college activities.
  - If you were trying to choose an occupation, you now are more aware of position titles, job descriptions and qualifications, types of employers, the skills utilized, as well as the interests and values expressed in several occupations.
  - If you were preparing for a job hunt, you are now more familiar with potential employer contacts and the hiring process. You have developed your interviewing skills and received feedback on your resume and job hunting strategies. You have also demonstrated assertive job hunting behaviors by selecting, scheduling, participating in and following through interview appointments.
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