

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS THE SECRET WEAPON TO FINDING A JOB

If you are not sure about your career goals or you feel that you lack experience and knowledge to be hired in the career you desire – an informational interview can provide the information you need.

One of the best ways to find out what a profession, company or position is like in reality, is to talk with people in the careers you are considering. These individuals can share their real life experiences, challenges and benefits.

If you talk to someone who is not thrilled with their career they will give you the drawbacks and limitations of any career.

An informational interview can lead to job interviews and offers.

HOW TO SET UP AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Informational interviews can be arranged through personal referrals, written requests or the result of you making a cold call telephone contact. You have a better chance for a favorable response if you send a written request, followed by a telephone call. Your letter is your preliminary introduction that explains your purpose.

The easiest way to schedule an informational interview is through a mutual acquaintance who makes the initial contact for you.

The interview is set up when and where it is most convenient for the person you have targeted. Obviously, a face-to-face meeting is the most beneficial, but don't turn down the chance to talk to someone on the phone. Any interview is better than no interview at all.

You may meet this person before or after work at a coffee shop vs. during working hours. You are going to ask them when it is most convenient and then you are going to make yourself available, regardless of the inconvenience to you.

WHEN TO SET UP AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Informational interviews are effective for all levels of job seekers:

- If you are in the process of selecting your major in college
- Making career choices
- Beginning a job search
- If you plan to transition to a totally different career

The informational interview can be an excellent tool to explore your options and increase your knowledge.

You do not want to choose a career path without taking the time to speak with professionals who are in this field of interest. Without this research you could find yourself in a career that is not a match for your skills, values or abilities.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE CORRECT PERSON

When someone else is opening a door for you, they often know someone in the company and have no problem making an introduction or providing you with names and contact information. If you are cold calling, you want to target the person who would be your boss's boss.

Most people welcome the chance to talk about themselves and how they attained the success in their career. When you compliment a person and tell them you want to learn from them or need their advice, their ego appreciates the compliment and they are more willing to set up a meeting.

HOW TO CONVERT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS INTO JOB INTERVIEWS

The informational interview is a highly focused information gathering session with a networking contact. Someone who can help you refine your search by providing you with the insider view of the position. Often, this informational interview becomes a job interview when the interviewer realizes the skills and experience you have to offer. Quite often, this person knows another hiring authority who could utilize your talent and they provide you with a referral that eventually ends up in a job offer.

BENEFITS OF THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

There are many benefits of the information interview, they allow you to:

- Gain valuable information from a professional on how they advanced in their particular career
- Learn job search strategies to land a similar job
- The interview will provide insight in their career to see if it is compatible with your skills, interests, goals and lifestyle
- Gain specific suggestions on how to acquire experience and knowledge needed
- Gain referrals to the hidden market of jobs – those not advertised
- Referrals to other professionals in their field

If done correctly, the informational interview is one of the most important techniques to utilize in your job search. If you have been unsuccessful scheduling job interviews, focus on both informational and job interviews starting today.