Interviews

It is crucial to be respectful, polite and thankful at all times. The IT professional involved is doing you a favour, and will no doubt be busy with many commitments. So make sure that you do not waste their time, and that you are explicitly state that you are very grateful for this opportunity.

The following is the suggested procedure.

1. Make contact with the IT professional, explain what you are doing, and ask for permission to interview them. One explanation that you could use is below, but the more you can use your own words, the better.

"As part of an assignment for an introductory subject in my IT degree, I have been asked to interview an IT professional in order to get some idea of the day-to-day work in the IT industry. I would be very grateful if you could spare up to 30 minutes of your valuable time to speak with me/us about this. Your responses will be used as input to our assignment report."

2. Arrange a time to meet and speak with the IT professional. This is best done face-to-face, but if this is not possible, then talking over the phone, via Skype or Google Hangouts, or even via email is possible. It is presumably most convenient for you to travel to where they work, so please make that your first suggestion. Naturally if that doesn't suit, then arrange whatever is most convenient for the IT professional.

3. Work out how you will ask the questions, and how the responses will be recorded. If there are two of you, it may work out that one person asks the questions, and the other records responses, or that you alternate asking questions, with the other person recording answers. Please do remember that it is a conversation, and it is more important to listen and respond to the person you are interviewing than to record every last little detail of what is said. **You may wish to record the conversation, but only do this with the explicit permission of the person you are interviewing.** So if you want to do this, ask the interviewee if you have their permission to record the conversation. If the response is anything other than a firm "Yes", then do not record it. If you do record it, make sure the recording device is clearly visible to the interviewee. You should also offer to email the interview a copy of the questions you will be asking.

4. Arrive for the appointment about 10 minutes early. When you first meet the interviewee, introduce yourselves, shake hands, and thank them for agreeing to talk with you. You should also briefly mention the background of each student. Once the introductions are done, if you wish to record the conversation, ask for permission. Then commence with the questions (see below).

5. Let the conversation flow, and do not try to stick too rigidly to the script. Remember that your objective is to get some insight into the day-to-day working life of the interviewee, and they may answer questions without explicitly being asked about them, or mention things that you find interesting. If the conversation stops, then move onto the next question as a way of keeping the conversation moving.

6. When the allotted time is up (usually 30 minutes, but it may be less), you should move to cease the interview, even if you have not finished answering questions. Make sure you shake hands again, and thank the interviewee again for their time.

Questions

1. Please tell us about your IT work. What exactly do you do?
2. Please tell us about the industry you work in.
3. What other kinds of work do you have to do?
4. Who are all the different people you interact with in your work? Please tell us about them.
5. Please tell us about your interactions with other IT professionals.
6. What about your interactions with clients or investors?
7. What aspects of your work do you spend most time on? Please tell us about these.
8. Which aspects of your work do you find most challenging?
9. Finally, can you share an example of the work you do that best captures the essence of the IT industry?