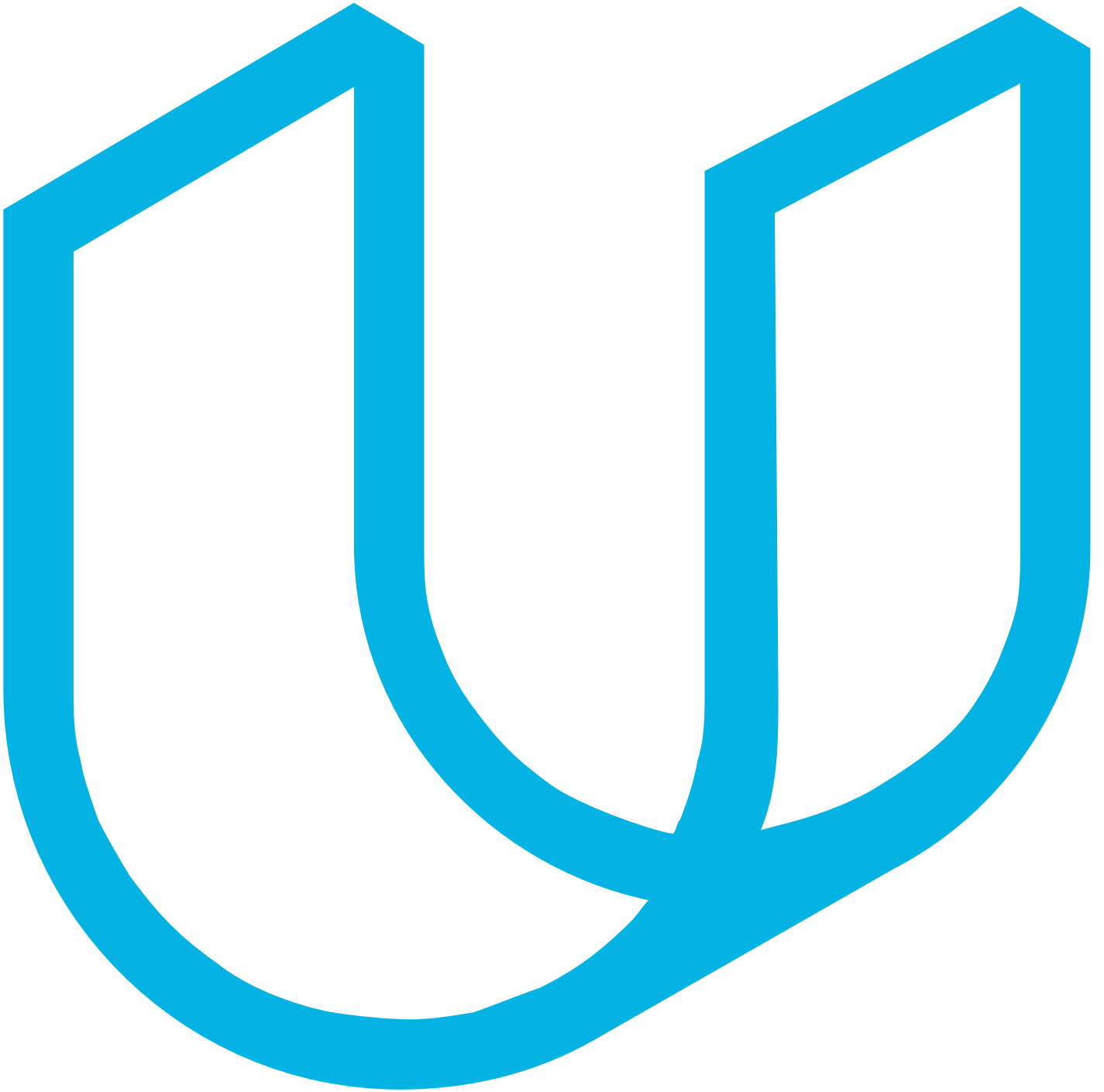UDACITY
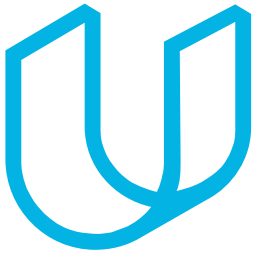
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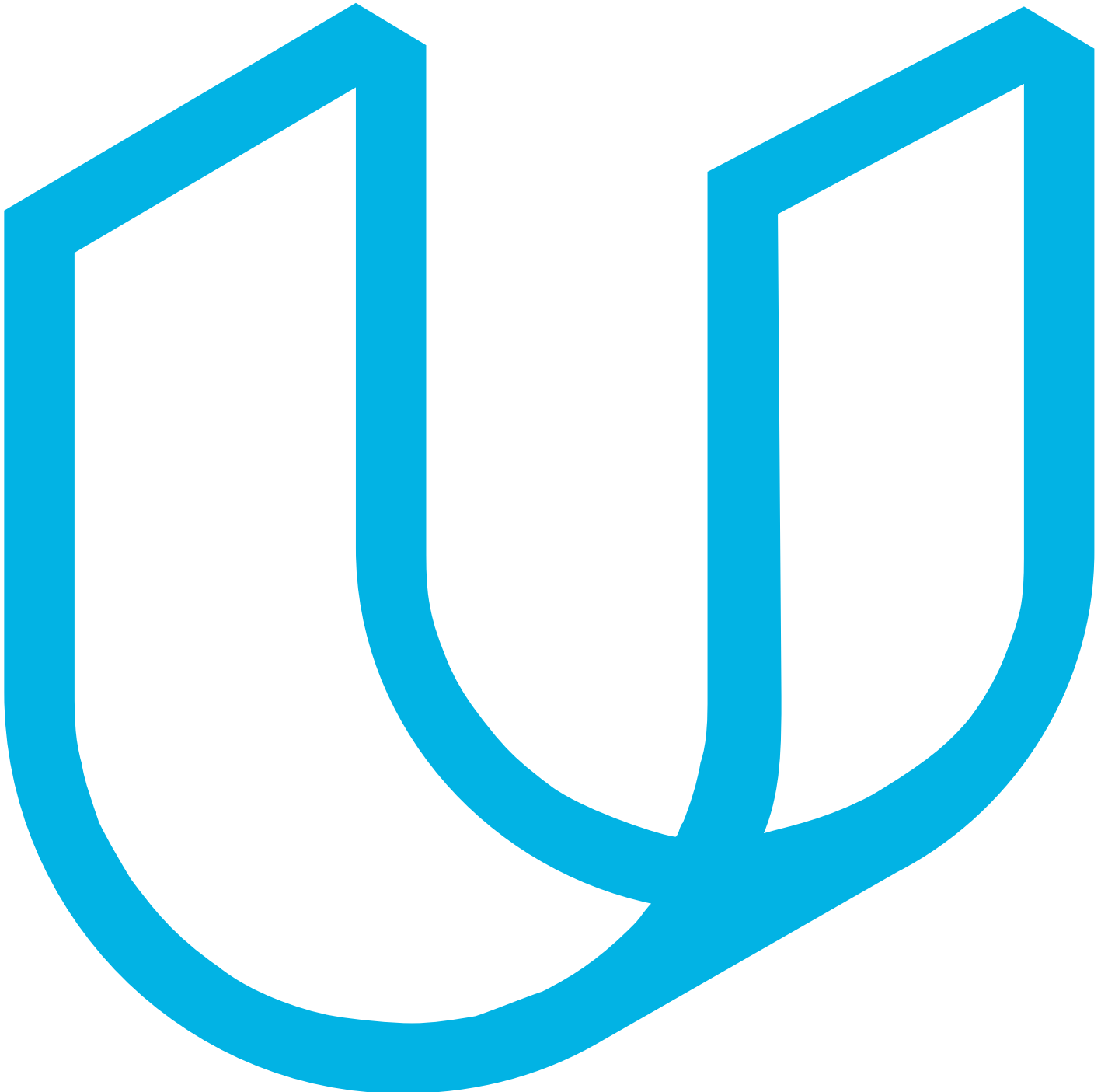[Blog](#) [My Classroom](#)

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Guide to Informational Interviews

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Informational Interviews

The informational interview is an integral part of the networking process. Seek out informational interviews early on in your job search so you can make informed decisions on companies and roles you may apply for.

An informational interview is often a one-on-one informal meeting, phone call or video conference where you lead a conversation with someone who is currently working in a role, company, or industry you are interested in. It is an opportunity for you to learn about company culture, responsibilities of a role as a particular company views it, industry prospects, or even open positions at the company. Informational interviews are also a great way to make new professional connections and expand your network, whether you're currently active on the job market or not.

In this guide, we'll go over:

- How to find people for an informational interview.
- How to reach out to someone, keep the conversation going, and follow up.
- What to ask in an informational interview.
- What to do after the information interview to keep the conversation going.

Locating a Prospective Informational Interview

For many job candidates in the process of entering a new industry, identifying people for an informational interview seems like a daunting task. To make it easier, start with those you know!

Reach out to your network

Friends, former supervisors, colleagues, family, and alumni groups are all communities filled with people who have your best interest at heart. These asks are often the easiest way to practice because you are already connected, directly or indirectly, to this community. Sometimes, you don't even need to ask a specific person; you can post a message like this on your social media profile:

> "Hey! I am currently in the process of transitioning into [x field] and would love to talk to any [y roles or employees at z company] to gain a better understanding of the work and industry. Please send me a direct message, and I'll be happy to buy you coffee!"

Target meetups, career fairs, public events, and LinkedIn.

There are often benefits for industry professionals to maintain an active network and mentor new talent. While each individual may have their own style and limits as to how much of their time or expertise they are willing to give, being proactive and letting others know you are both interested and dedicated can yield great conversations and future contacts. If you see yourself underrepresented in a particular role or field, take the time to seek out even high-profile influencers you do identify with! You never know when you'll bump into them at an industry event in the future.

When deciding who to contact, **target companies and roles separately**. For example, if you are seeking out a product manager position but your only contact at your dream company is someone in Sales, you can still take the opportunity to learn more about the company culture and vision. They may also be able to provide an introduction to a product manager within the company. On the other hand, speaking with a product

manager at a company or in an industry outside of your immediate interests can also be worthwhile as a way to learn about the role's professional responsibilities.

Your ultimate goal with an informational interview is to build your knowledge and professional network, so although the ideal situation would be to interview someone with your dream role in your dream industry, don't disregard a chance to learn about a variety of positions and companies.

Arranging an Informational Interview

Taking the initiative to plan and schedule a meeting is the first step to a successful informational interview. Below, we outline helpful tips on where to start:

Outreach Emails

An initial email is one of the most common ways of extending a request for an informational interview.

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your connection to the person you are writing to. Be clear and upfront with your request.

- Your tone should be gracious; at no point should you assume that they are obligated to offer you their time or attention, regardless of how you know each other.

2. Make sure that your email is concise and specific.

- For example, if you're hoping for a 20-minute phone call, you can say: "If you have time for a 20-minute phone call, I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the company."

Note: Follow-up etiquette. Sometimes, you will not get an immediate reply. They could be on vacation or overwhelmed with messages. Be sure to allow enough time (up to 2 weeks) for a response. If they have not responded within a week, you can send one follow-up inquiry.

If you aren't able to schedule a live conversation but the contact is still willing to answer some questions over email or LinkedIn, make sure that your questions are polished, well-researched (that is, nothing that you'd be able to find on the company website), and appropriate (nothing overly personal, no direct requests for leverage unless invited).

Outreach Email Sample

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Use this example to guide how you write your own request to hold an informational interview.

Was this resource helpful? YES|NO

Can you identify all the different parts of the outreach email that we identified above? Is there anything you would do differently?

Once they have replied to your email, **do your best to respond within 24 hours and lock down a time as soon as possible**. Few things are more discouraging than a promising connection petering out due to late responses.

During the Informational Interview: How to Make the Most of Your Opportunity

Now that your informational interview is scheduled, prepare yourself to ensure you make the most of your learning opportunity. We recommend doing preliminary research on both the company and the individual, drafting sample questions, and practicing beforehand. Below are a few guidelines:

Focused Approach

Come prepared with smart, relevant questions. If you can find the answer to your question on Google or on the company website, you can be fairly confident that it won't be the best question to ask. Instead, **opt for open-ended questions with potential for insightful answers**. Before the interview, create a sample question list. During the interview, take notes on the information you learn and be mindful of your goals. Ask clarifying questions as needed.

Sample Questions

- What are some interesting aspects of your job?
- Any advice for someone looking to enter the field?
- How relevant was your education in getting this job?
- What other careers did you consider?
- How do you approach professional development in this field?
- What are you doing to keep your skills up-to-date?
- What do you wish you knew before you entered this field?

Goals

Be goal-oriented throughout the interview. Think of a few outcomes you would like to achieve at the end of the interview. For example, your goal may be to build your network, find more contacts, or access insider information about company and culture. We also recommend approaching the interview as an opportunity to gain recommendations for resources (blogs, books, etc) relevant to your industry.

Finally, **make it a goal to leave a positive impression**. Even if your new contact isn't able to directly help you advance in your job search right now, you never know when they may think of you for a future opportunity.

Following The Interview: How to Keep the Conversation Going

Now that you've made a personal connection, keep it going! **Send a thank you note within 24 hours; email is fine!** If anything particularly memorable happened during your conversation, you may want to mention it in order to reinforce that you were actively listening and engaged. When sending your thank you email, send your resume so they can introduce you to others and remember who you are. Over time, keep in touch through holiday greetings, sharing information about topics of interest, and keeping them posted on progress in your job search. People like to help others and hear that they are making a positive impact!

[Thank You Email Sample](#)

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Follow-up with your contact by sending them an email like this.

Final Takeaways: Informational Interviews and Nanodegree Students

The most common Nanodegree student questions about informational interviews stem from entering a new industry and uncertainty about how to make new connections. To address these concerns, remember:

- People generally want to help! It is a chance to give back, network and simply share excitement and information about a job. You will likely be surprised by people's willingness to share.
- Start building relationships as soon as possible; these are long-term relationships that will require some nurturing.
- Take advantage of your Udacity community. Classmates, instructors, and support staff are all a part of your network.
- Get out of your comfort zone and learn to be proactive about asking. The worst that can happen is that someone declines or does not respond to your request.

- Be optimistic and resourceful. Informational interviews are great learning experiences and practice for future job interviews.

Good Luck!

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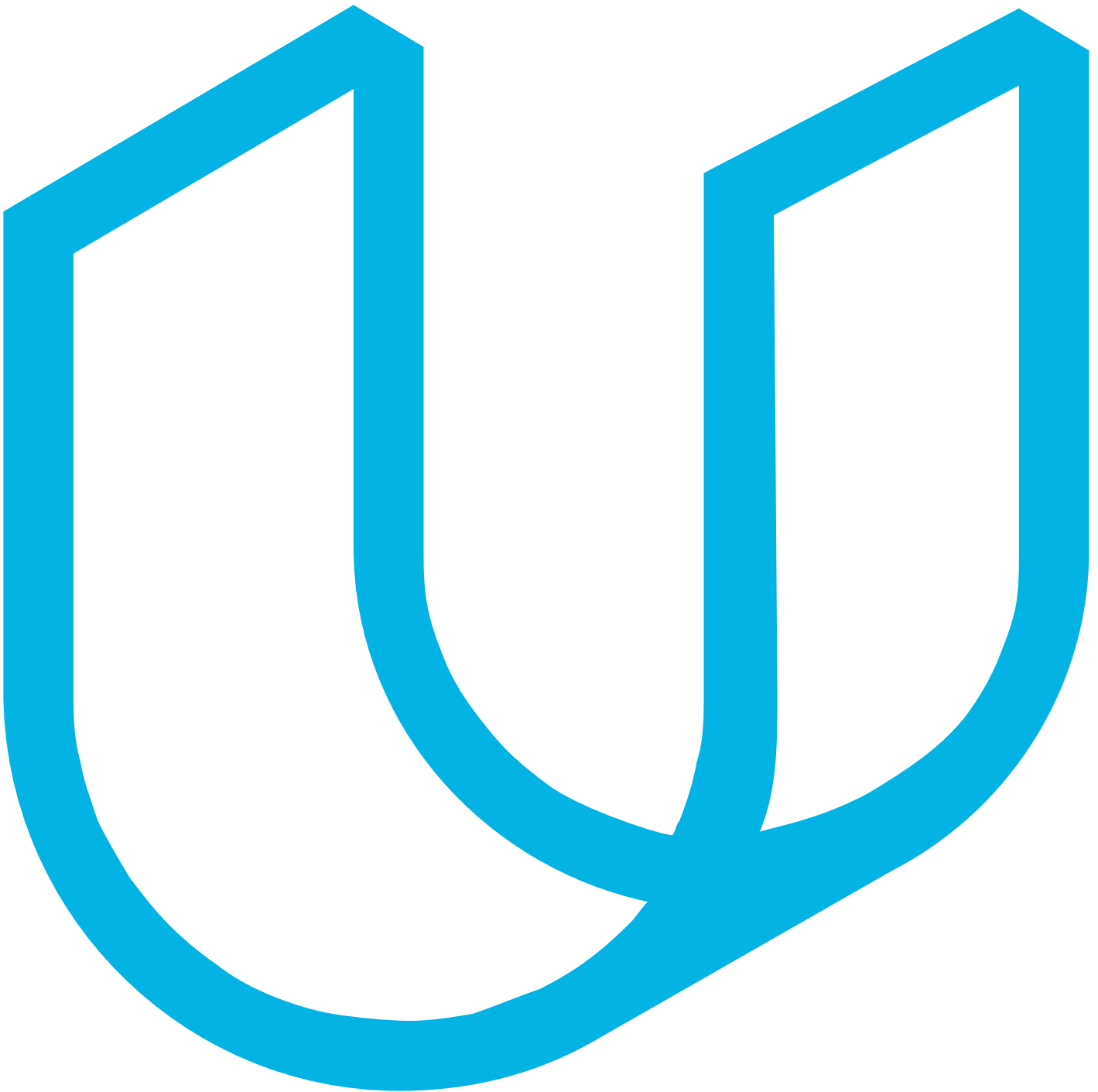
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