



# Nailing Informationals

In this lesson, we delve into the do's and don'ts to practice when invited to an informational.

Different companies have different recruitment processes, and you may or may not end up talking to a hiring manager before being invited for a phone screen or an on-site interview. Companies that hire generalists in large numbers, such as Google and Facebook, usually do not require an informational or a phone screen with the hiring manager. On the other hand, managers at companies that typically employ a team-based hiring process (e.g., Netflix and Salesforce) drive a lot of hiring for their respective teams. With these companies, a candidate may be asked to do an informational with a manager.

An informational can mean a phone call or a cup of coffee with the hiring manager. The hiring manager usually has a headcount open that he wants to fill with a candidate possessing the required skill set. Typically, the manager wants to learn about a candidate's past experiences, gauge interest, and watch for any behavioral red flags. It is also a candidate's chance to inquire more about the open position, team, and the company. The manager may ask technical questions not requiring the whiteboard, but that is uncommon.

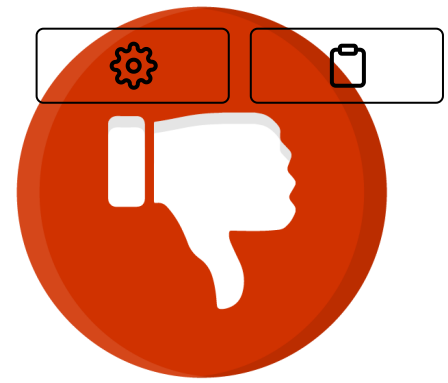


Usually, these conversations start with brief introductions, followed by an overview of the position and team by the manager, and end with questions about the candidate's interests and past experiences. As you conduct these meetings, it will be useful to adhere to the following guidelines:

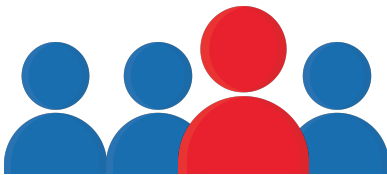
- Be super excited to work for the company, or at least feign interest and excitement.
- Show genuine interest in the domain the company or the team works in.
- Be sure to ask good questions to demonstrate your keenness in the position. Some examples include:
  - What is the particular role about?
  - The role is described as an individual contributor, but does it involve technical leadership, as I have been doing a lot of that in my current role?
  - Do you have a particular project in mind that the individual filling this position would work on?
- Be sure to ask questions around the team e.g.:
  - Who is the consumer of the team's product? Is it an internal customer or an external one?
  - What does the short and long-term team roadmap look like?
  - What technology stack do you guys use?
  - What are the biggest pain points for the team as of now?
  - What are the challenges the team faces?
  - What growth opportunities exist within the company in general and in particular, for the person filling this role?

The informational sessions generally are non-technical and usually do not involve a knock-out. However, some of the reasons a manager may pass over a candidate are:

- Lack of relevant experience (or background)
- The candidate did not seem passionate about the role/company.
- Not a culture-fit
- Behavioral or personality red flags



Some candidates do not consider culture-fit to be an important criterion. It is surprising how many candidates get dinged as a culture misfit despite being otherwise technically qualified for the job. This is more common at companies that deeply care about their cultures such as Netflix and Airbnb.



As an anecdote, an ex-Googler interviewing for a people management role was turned down at an interview debrief. The candidate casually made misogynist remarks about women engineers that did not sit well with the reviewers.

Yet, in another debrief, a rockstar engineer was not extended an offer because everyone on the loop thought he was resistant to receiving feedback. In another episode, Salesforce rescinded an outstanding offer because the candidate had used unsavory and abrasive language when negotiating salary over email. One of the authors of this course, too, was once turned down after an informational with a Netflix manager. The recruiter later gave feedback that the manager thought the candidate was looking for too much autonomy. In essence, for the recruitment drives, it is important that you acquaint yourself with the norms of the organization that you are applying to.

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