

Helpful Tips on Informational Interviewing

What is an informational Interview?

An informational interview is a meeting that is usually initiated by an individual looking to enter a particular career, graduate program, company, industry, etc. The goal of the meeting is for the individual to learn about the particular career from someone already established in it, to get an idea of what the day to day operations looks like in that career, what employers are looking for in potential job candidates, among other things. It also serves as a networking tool that often times opens doors to job opportunities and as a way to expand an individual's knowledge of an industry to help make career decisions. While an informational interview can lead to a job interview and a potential job offer, it is a more casual conversation that is led by the individual seeking the information about the career rather than the employee already in the field.

What are the benefits?

- Networking, increase contacts in professional fields you are interested in
- Insider knowledge on the company
- Can lead to a job opportunity
- Help narrow down interests and clarify educational/ career goals
- Great advice from experts in the field on how to prepare for a particular industry
- Learn about the culture of company
- Shows potential employers desirable qualities you hold (ambition, go getter, confidence, etc)
- Practice interviewing skills in a less stressful situation

How to Initiate and Conduct an Information Interview?

1. Find a contact in a career, industry, graduate program you are interested in through networking, family/ friends, websites, etc.
2. Reach out via LinkedIn, email, or phone call and request an informational interview
3. Be flexible with scheduling, they are doing you a favor- make yourself available on their schedule
4. Research the company, career, program, individual, etc and compile a list of questions to ask
5. Bring a copy of your resume
6. Dress professionally as if on a job interview
7. Relax, enjoy, and be yourself – try to keep the interview in its scheduled time frame
8. Send a follow up thank you email or hand written thank you card

Sample Questions:

- What interested you in this career?
- What is your educational background? What was your major in college?
- What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing this path?
- Walk me through a typical day. What are some challenges you encounter? What is the most rewarding aspect?
- If you could go back to your college self, what would you have done differently to prepare for this job?
- What are growth opportunities like in this field?
- What entry level jobs offer the best learning opportunities for this career?

- How much flexibility do you have in your individual approach to performing job duties?
- What is the work schedule like and how is the work/life balance?
- What skills do you have from this job are transferable to other jobs if you had to change careers?
What other jobs can you get with this same background?
- How is your job performance evaluated?
- What professional organizations should I join if I want to enter this field?
- Do you know of other people who have similar job in this field I may contact?
- What are admission requirements? What can I do to stand out? How many people do you accept a year?
- What type of internship experience, work experience, research experience, etc do you look for when hiring?
- Would you be willing to take a look at my resume to see if you have any suggestions?

Sample Email Requesting an Informational Interview:

Career:

Good Morning Dr. Mr/Mrs (name),

I am currently an undergraduate psychology student at Florida International University. I am finishing up my (junior year) and am trying to narrow down my career options. I noticed on (company/agency/ school) website that you are a (position) for (company/agency/ school). I am interested in pursuing a career path that will lead me to a position similar to yours. I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you for a brief informational interview to learn about your educational and career path. Thank you for the consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Name and contact information)

Graduate Program:

Good Morning Dr. (Name),

I am currently an undergraduate psychology student at Florida International University. I am thinking about pursuing post graduate work focusing in (area of study). I was referred to speak with you regarding your research by (referral source: professor, advisor, etc).* I am interested in a career in (career field) and would like to learn more about (graduate program). I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you for a brief informational interview on the (graduate program/ research opportunity). Thank you for the consideration.

Sincerely,

(Your Name and contact information)

*If you don't not have a referral source use the above example for career if you extracted contact information from a graduate program website: "I noticed on (company/agency/ school) website that you are a (position) for (company/agency/ school)."

Adrienne Yuen Florida International University