**Week 8: Informational Interview**

This document contains the template you will use to complete this assignment. Save the file by adding your last name to the filename (e.g. Week8\_Informational\_Interview\_Template\_Smith.docx). Be sure to proofread and spell check your work before you submit it.

A grading rubric is also available at the end of this document.

There are FIVE steps to the Informational Interview.

**Step 1:** Compile a list of individuals in your target career field whom you would like to interview. Try to identify people who are working at a company in which you are interested. This is a good opportunity to practice your networking skills. Let your classmates, friends, family members, and colleagues know that you need to complete an informational interview with someone in your intended career field. You’ll be amazed at how effective networking can be.

**Step 2:** Prepare a brief introduction of yourself and the purpose(s) of the informational interview. Prepare a list of open-ended questions that would be appropriate to ask during the informational interview. An Internet search using “informational interview” will provide you with many examples of questions you might want to use.

**Step 3:** Practice your interview with a classmate, friend, family member, or colleague and ask them to critique your performance. Identify ways to improve based on their feedback.

**Step 4:** Set up a day and time for the interview. Record the interviewee’s responses to your questions. Send a thank-you letter, note, or email to the interviewee within two business days of completing the interview.

**Step 5:** Complete the table below and submit it in Week 8.

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| **Your Name: Anthony Meunier** | |
| **Interviewee Information** | |
| Name of Interviewee | *Troy Busse* |
| Contact Information (phone number and/or email address) (Please note that we may contact your interviewee to confirm the interview.) | *Troy.busse@Activision.com* |
| Company | *Activision* |
| Position | *QA Applications Programmer* |

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| Question #1: *How would you describe the overall mission and goals of your organization?* | Response: *The clear focus of Activision is to create great games, and games that sell. Anyone who is familiar with video games will know our emblem emblazoned upon the cover of many of the major games played today. Activision strives to provide the best possible titles and content that gamers want, and therefore our team is held to a very high standard in order to produce and deliver very high quality products. A lot of emphasis is placed on being at our best in order to be the best in the industry. A lot of prestige goes into working here and I think it really reflects in the products and games that we make. Simply put, the products speak for themselves and are some of the highest grossing games and franchises ever produced. To put it another way, our mission is simply to make great games, and we rely on our highly talented and creative team to achieve this.* |
| Question #2: *What are the characteristics and competencies of people who are successful in this field?* | Response: *People who are successful in this field are problem solvers. They are able to think outside of the box and apply critical thinking in order to develop products that are efficient, effective, and reliable in delivering the experience to the customer. You also have to be a go-getter in the sense that you don’t wait around and respond to things, you proactively work to achieve what’s needed. By doing this you remain on the cutting edge of development and you eliminate a lot of issues before they have the opportunity to arrive. As a programmer, your sole goal is to deliver content that is rock solid in both operation and longevity, and being efficient and ahead of the curve helps achieve this.* |
| Question #3: *What are the core components in performing your job on a daily basis?* | Response: *As a programmer I am given tasks to program (haha). Mostly what this means is that I create the logic to make something happen. If my lead tells me we need a ball that rolls around freely, I am able to develop this object for another team to use wherever its needed later on in the application. This is just a simple example of course. Another core component and what makes up a large portion of what I do each day is troubleshooting and debugging. Besides just being able to program and create the objects, I need to be able to check programs to ensure that they are highly functional and error free. This goes for my own work as well as checking other pieces of content created by the team to make sure at the end of it we have a fully functional and reliable program, which ultimately leads to something within a game environment. Generating reports of my findings is a large part of the job as it is a tangible way to record my experiences and findings and pass them on to all concerned parties. A lot of people think programmers just play the video games that we make, but there is much more legwork just leading up to this part than I think a lot of people ever consider.* |
| Question #4: *What experiences best prepared you for your job?* | Response: *I would say my experience is unique in the sense that I went straight from my degree program to actually working on large scale titles and projects at a very well-known and prestigious company. The level of work expected here is top notch, and diving right into it was definitely a challenge, but a welcomed one. Not having previous work experience in the industry, my greatest experiences and assets all come from my schooling. Being very involved and overall proactive and interested in and about the subject matter kept me going during my education. I was never hesitant to stay after class and get help from and even become friends with the professors, network extensively with other students, complete work and projects in groups with other like-minded students and so on. I feel like this hands-on approach never left me in a position where there was something I was not understanding or was daunted by, because if I was feeling that way about anything I used any resource possible to get the answers and experience I needed. Besides all of that, another thing that I feel was really beneficial was setting a goal from the start and staying true to it throughout, and all the way here to my current job now as a programmer. If I had been wishy washy or unfocused at any point in selecting and executing my degree program I may have went down another path… all I know is I’m glad where I ended up and thankful for the journey along the way.* |
| Question #5: *What is a typical career path in this industry?* | Response: *The IT industry is one with a pretty linear progression as far as start to finish in your career. Any time you are getting your start in this field you will be considered entry-level simply because you do not have any real world experience yet. After gaining some experience over the years it’s only natural that your mastery over the subject is expanded and you may then move into a mid-level type of position, or if you’re really good you may just skip over this and go right into senior-level. So just starting out or at least the first few years of your career you really need to focus on expanding this knowledge and mastery like I mentioned because this is the direct way you will show you are capable of being higher level and moving up the chain. Outside of a senior-level employee, which really isn’t dictated by age but rather by experience and demonstrated mastery there isn’t much else above generally speaking. Eventually if you were to excel even further up the chain you would be considered a lead which would mean you are at the absolute top for your respective department (example being lead programmer) and have a number of employees underneath you in the department whom you would manage on a given project. So the general progression again would be entry-level (called junior) to mid-level to senior, and eventually a team or project lead if you wanted a management role.* |
| Question #6: *What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?* | Response: *I want to say that being a computer programmer is unique in its own way, but at the same time shares many basic principles of general “coding” that can be applicable elsewhere. First thing that obviously comes to mind is web development which often has a lot of “code-behind” that actually make the applications run – the logic of the application so to speak. In addition to web development there is also a marriage of any type of programming and database management as well, as most programs and web applications rely on some type of database to fill and get data from. I'm sure you are aware of this already though having experienced most of this in your CIS degree program. So if you didn’t want to specialize in just straight programming or debugging associated with programming, then working in one of these other fields may be a good balance because you still have some elements but the day to day work would be quite different. Just depends what’s important you, what you enjoy or don’t in your experience so far.* |
| Question #7: *What opportunities, besides promotion, are there for skill-building and advancement in the field?* | Response: *I would say one of the best methods of actually getting a promotion is to take initiative and build your skills further, both in the workplace and out of it. If supervisors notice that you have become much more proficient and efficient then this is what will let you advance in the ranks when review time comes. In order to build these skills you definitely want to be fine tuning them as often as you can and a great way to do this is by taking certification programs. Not only can you add to your current skills in this way, but you can also branch out and receive some training in other areas which could also help get you noticed and even lead to you being able to fill another position if the opportunity presented itself. I see that you are already working on some certifications and I couldn’t emphasize more how proactive of an idea that is, keep it up.* |
| Question #8: *What do you think about my technical training and experience so far, and what types of positions would it qualify me for?* | Response: *I think you have a pretty well-rounded background so far from your technical training at DeVry. Being that you selected general CIS as your degree program, you have or will have a little bit of training in every major field in the IT industry. Personally I have a degree directly in computer programming which really built my skills in a specific field and I feel that really helped me transition quickly to a career. One of the issues I can foresee is that you may be considered very entry-level in whatever field you do select because you will have only a limited knowledge of those concepts rather than a complete background in only those concepts. But you should know already what you have training in and what those fields lead to, obviously some examples being programming, database, web development, system testing… probably all things you’ve done far, and all would have their own respective fields within the IT industry as well. Just be prepared for the fact that your knowledge in any one of these fields, at least based on your degree and excluding any extra training I may not be aware of, limits you in the beginning to just an entry-level position.* |
| Question #9: *How do you feel your company compares to others in the field and are you happy working there?* | Response: *I got really lucky with being hired on to Activision from the get-go, as any of us in the industry, especially video games specifically, knows how giant and influential Activision is in both the industry and the market. While there are others here that are younger as well and were hired straight out of school, the majority are seasoned veterans as this company really only hires the best since every title is considered AAA. There isn’t any room for errors here and our typical products reach millions of customers, so the culture is very tailored around this and being at the top of the game is strongly embedded in all of us who work here. It’s definitely a privilege and a sign of prestige to say that I work here, and I see it as a place I could work my entire career. I was very lucky to start here and I would say it’s a good goal for anyone in the industry to aim for in terms of finding a lasting home to flourish with in your career. There are of course a couple other companies that are on an almost similar level in terms of market share and influence, but working at those places would be just as prestigious I’m sure. It’s also important to note that size isn’t everything, although it does offer some job security, and there are many smaller indie developers and companies where there might be a more tight-knit relationship amongst departments and coworkers naturally. That could be something to value as well.* |
| Question #10: *What is your biggest challenge in your job role?* | Response: *Relating back to your last question, one of the most fundamental issues that I personally have in my job role is the fact that the work I do is fairly isolated. I work on smaller pieces that make up a larger whole. While this is nice in some teamwork sense and feeling like I am doing my part, it is sometimes frustrating to not have more background information or direct interaction with the product while it’s in other stages. Example being I may have some general guidelines of how something should function and therefore how I need to program it, but sometimes I am lacking more context and interfacing with other pieces of the software that I feel would be helpful to me. This is mostly bureaucratic and due to the company being so large and having so many divisions. It’s a minor complaint and the end project always turns out great, but going through this process semi-blind is sometimes hard for me to get acclimated to.* |
| Summarize your learnings from the informational interview. Think about what you’ve learned about the company, the interviewee’s career path, your potential career path, the company culture, skills that you may need but don’t have, etc. (*minimum 100 words*)  I feel reassured more than anything after conducting the informational interview. I think the fact that the interviewee was someone very close in age and experience as me helped demonstrate to me that it is possible to achieve whatever you set out to do. More specifically, taking some of the analysis and feedback I received from someone actually in the industry helped me get a better idea of how or where I may fit in when my time comes to search for a career. I understand that it may not be possible to excel to a high position in a prestigious company right away, but by building and refining skills over time the possibilities only branch further and further. One thing in particular that stood out, and that of course I had already considered (was just interesting to get another opinion it) was how my degree program can both hurt and help me when searching for a career in the industry. I feel that if I narrow down my focus and perhaps build my skills up in one particular field through more certification/training programs I will have the skills I need to not only succeed in that job role, but also have a broad range of other, transferrable technical skills that can be applied in other fields as well. This gives me good range in searching for a job, and gives me leeway to make changes later on in my career as well. Speaking specifically on the company, it sounds like a good end goal to work there or somewhere similar in stature and reputation, but I’m also realistic in knowing that I may have to work my way up there and I am fine with that journey. I’ve always felt that every step on your journey plays an important role in influencing your story (career in this context), and I definitely feel that this information and advice was honest and realistic and will help me better forge my own path in this industry. | |

**Grading Rubric: Informational Interview**

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| **Criteria that Submitted Assignment Meets** | **Total Points Possible for Assignment** |
| Informational interview has been completed, name and contact information for interviewee is provided, questions and answers are documented, and learnings are summarized. *Deduct up to 10 points for spelling and grammatical errors.* | 90-100 |
| Deduct points for missing elements of the assignment. *Deduct up to 10 points for spelling and grammatical errors.* | 0-89 |