

Informational Interviews

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What is an Informational Interview?

A meeting where a job seeker meets with professionals (in person, over the phone, or via Skype) in their desired career field to learn more about the professional's career path, specific companies' cultures, and the industry as a whole; while building meaningful connections.

Objective: To learn about a particular career and to gain a professional connection that may lead to a future job opportunity.

Tips for Informational Interview Success

1. Don't be Afraid to Ask

You may be asking someone that you know or a complete stranger, but don't be afraid to ask for the interview. Most professionals are willing to help job seekers learn as much as they can about their future careers. Send a friendly email, LinkedIn message, or call them personally to ask for the interview.

2. Do Your Research

Know why you have chosen a specific person or company/organization to interview. Do your homework beforehand! Look them up on LinkedIn or through the organization's webpage or social media platforms. If the interviewee sees that you are prepared, they will be impressed from the start!

3. Prepare Your Questions

Let the conversation between you and your interviewee flow naturally, but also have specific questions in mind that you can ask to ensure that you are gaining all of the information that you want. Be sure to look on the following pages for a list of questions that you can adapt and use in your interviews!

4. Dress to Impress and Talk in a Quiet Area

Dress as you would for a job interview—you are making a first professional impression, after all! Ensure that you are talking in a quiet area, whether it be their office in person or in a study room if you are talking via phone or Skype.

5. Ask for Advice, Not a Job!

You are interviewing this person to learn about their career path and their company/organization. You may ask for advice and other referrals to communicate with and learn from, but you should not outright ask for a job. Let your professional presence and enthusiasm speak for itself, and you may find yourself with a job or internship sooner or later!

6. Say Thank You and Stay Connected

Be sure to follow up and send a thank you note! Connect with your interviewee on LinkedIn and keep them up to date on your career exploration/job search!

Sample Informational Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the career path that led you to your job.
Pro Tip: Review their LinkedIn profile or company website to ask a more specific question. For example: “I understand you are from Des Moines and you worked in sales there. How did you wind up working in advertising in New York?”
2. Tell me about your job. What are the core components?
3. What experiences best prepared you for your job?
4. What do you like most about your job?
5. What is the most challenging part about your job?
6. Is there something you wish you had known before starting out in this industry?
7. What kind of problems do you face on a day to day basis?
8. What is it like to work for this specific company/organization?
9. What is one thing I could do now to stand out in the job market?
10. How does the future look in your field?
11. What are some of the long-term trends in your business?
12. What is a typical career path in this business/industry?
13. What city should I live in if I want to pursue this profession?
14. What is a typical entry-level title?
15. What is your hiring process like?
16. Where do you see your career going from here?
17. Where do you see this industry heading?
18. What skill set is your business looking for?
19. What would be good internship experiences I should consider?
20. Who else would you recommend that I talk to in this industry?

Sample Informational Interview Request

Subject: Informational Interview Request

Dear Ms. Adams,

My name is Elwood Lancer. I am a current student at Longwood University where I am majoring in Marketing. I found your contact information through your organization’s website, and I am very intrigued by your position and career path. I would love the opportunity to learn more about your skills and expertise as well as your organization as a whole.

If you have 20-30 minutes to spare in the coming weeks, I would enjoy talking with and learning from you. Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Elwood Lancer