



## **Informational Interviews**

### **How to Gain Information about Specific Career Paths**

Conducting informational interviews can open doors.

In an informational interview, you seek leads and information regarding an industry, a career path, or an employer by talking to people you know or who have been referred to you. Informational interviews are not primarily about looking for a job, but about gaining information or getting an impression of interesting professional fields and employers. Ideally, it takes place at the workplace of the person you are interviewing. Telephoning / online meetings are more time-saving and practical, they are often a good, but rather a second-best option.

In this process, you might have to step a little out of your comfort zone, but it usually pays off. With preparation, listening, and follow-through, you will find the power of people helping each other. Each step will take you closer to your personal career goals.

### **Tips for Informational Interviewing**

#### **Identify the information you want**

Deciding which position, company, or industry you want to learn about will depend on what you want to do with your life and career. You should have a sense of what is important to you and what you want.

#### **Make a list of people you know (network analysis)**

Choose those who can help you connect to other people within a company or an industry. Since this is part of networking, you will want to include anyone and everyone you know, from your barber to your sister-in-law.

#### **Make the appointment**

Set up a 15- to 30-minute interview with the person identified to cover his or her specialty. Most people will be more than happy to help you. Don't get discouraged if you find some people are just too busy to give you an appointment.

### **Plan an agenda for the session**

This is your meeting. Don't assume the person will give you the information you need unless you ask the right questions. Select questions that will give you the most information. Be efficient, and do not overstay your welcome.

Here are some examples of questions you might want to ask:

- What does a typical working day look like?
- What are your most important tasks?
- What do you particularly like about your job?
- Are there any downsides in your opinion?
- How was your personal career path which lead you to your present position?
- How will your area of work change in the next five to ten years?
- Which people will be needed then? What skills, qualities, and knowledge should they have?
- Can you name one or two other people who work in your industry / your company / who work in a smaller / larger organization (abroad ...) and to whom I could talk?

### **Conduct yourself as a professional**

Dress and act the role of the position you are seeking. Gather as much information as possible about the company before the interview so you can ask informed questions.

### **Show personal interest**

A little flattery goes a long way. Say something like, "Mary gave me your name and told me you're considered an expert in your field. How did you get started?"

### **Be prepared to answer questions about what you're looking for**

Have a short personal statement prepared that you can present if you're asked about your job search. Bring a CV, but don't offer it unless it is requested. Remember, the purpose of this interview is to obtain information.

### **Send thank-you and follow-up emails**

Thank the person at the end of the interview, but also send a thank-you letter stating your gratitude for the time given. Stay in touch with your contacts by writing notes or emails, informing the person how helpful his suggestions have been to you. By writing to your interview partner, you also give them the chance to come back to you if there is a vacancy of interest to you in the future.

Parts of this text taken from Carole Martin, Monster contributor:

<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/Informational-Interviewing>