



Career and Internship Services

Informational Interviewing

Often the best information about a career field comes from people who are actually working in that career. An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you who will give you information and advice. Through informational interviewing you can find out about an area of work in general, a specific industry or employer, and positions in that industry or with that employer. Although the main purpose of informational interviewing is to find out more about the particular area in which you are interested, it is also a means of starting a network of contacts that can ultimately help you in your job search. An informational interview is not a job interview, and the objective is not to ask for a job.

You may feel awkward making arrangements to talk with people you don't know about their work. However, most people actually enjoy taking a few minutes out of their day to reflect on their professional life and give advice to someone with an interest in their field

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Expand Your Knowledge:

- ◆ Get first-hand and relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry. This information is not always available in print.
- ◆ Find out about career paths you did not know existed.
- ◆ Find out the negative and positive aspects of a field, job, or company.
- ◆ Go beyond job titles to discover what skills, work style, and background are best for the positions you are considering.
- ◆ Decide what you should be reading and what professional associations you should join.
- ◆ Polish your communication skills and learn jargon you will need to work in a specific field.
- ◆ Expand your network of contacts for future interviews and make contacts with people who may be potential employers.

Uncover potential job opportunities:

- ◆ Learn about opportunities that are never advertised or recruited for.
- ◆ Increase the possibility that you will be invited to job interviews on the referrals you receive.

FIVE STEPS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING:

1. Identify people to interview

- ◆ Pursue your own contacts. People you already know, even if they aren't in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, teaching assistants, professors and former employers.

- ◆ Call organizations directly or visit their website for the name of someone working within a particular area of interest.
- ◆ Visit the Career Center's Information Lab to review employer directories, past job listing binders, and other resources.
- ◆ Read newspaper and magazine articles.
- ◆ Contact professional or trade associations.
- ◆ Identify names of DUC alumni from the alumni webpage at <http://alumni.dominican.edu/>. Dominican graduates will often take special interest in DUC students.

2. Initiate contact

- ◆ Contact the person by phone, email, or letter.
- ◆ Mention how you got his or her name.
- ◆ Emphasize that you are looking for information, not a job.
- ◆ Ask for a convenient time to have a 15-30 minute appointment.

Sample Telephone Script Requesting An Informational Interview

Hello. My name is _____ and I'm a (i.e. junior) majoring in _____ at Dominican University. I found your name through/from _____. Although I am not currently looking for a job, I have become very interested in (name of position) and would like to find out as much as I can about the field.

Would it be possible to schedule 15 to 30 minutes with you at your convenience to ask you a few questions and get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?

3. Prepare for the interview

- ◆ Do some initial research on the career field or employer using employer's websites, print resources, and the internet:
 - ◆ www.wetfeet.com
 - ◆ www.vault.com
 - ◆ www.hoovers.com
 - ◆ <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>
- ◆ Plan open-ended questions to ask. Open-ended questions are questions that allow the respondent to elaborate more on their answer. They usually begin with "How", "What", "Describe", "Tell me about." Close-ended questions, on the other hand, are used if you seek brief answers (e.g. yes/no response).
 - ◆ Open-Ended: Tell me what you enjoy about your job.
 - ◆ Close-Ended: Do you enjoy your job?
- ◆ Develop a 30-second overview of yourself, including your reasons for contacting this person, as a way to introduce yourself and define the context of this meeting. Clarify your skills and interests and be prepared to discuss them.
- ◆ Dress neatly and appropriately as you would for a job interview.

4. **Conduct the informational interview**

- ◆ Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- ◆ Take notes if you'd like.
- ◆ Respect the person's time. Keep the appointment length within the time span that you requested.
- ◆ Always ask for names of other people to talk to for additional information or a different perspective.

5. **Follow-up**

- ◆ Keep records. Right after the interview write down what you learned (including the suggestions or advice given to you), what more you'd like to know and your reactions in terms of how this industry, field, or position would "fit" with your lifestyle, interest skills, and future career plans. Organize the information into a file folder or card box.
- ◆ **Email or send a hand written or word processed thank-you note within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.**
- ◆ Keep in touch with the person; let him or her know that you followed up on their advice and how things are going as a result. This relationship could become an important part of your network.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS DO I ASK?

Your questions will vary according to the type of informational interview you are conducting (i.e. for background information on a career field or for specific facts on a job or employer). Some general questions are:

- ◆ How did you get into this job/career?
- ◆ What is a typical workday like for you?
- ◆ What do you like best about your career/job/employer?
- ◆ What do you find least satisfying about this career/job/employer?
- ◆ What are the various jobs available in this field?
- ◆ What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this career/company?
- ◆ If you were in my shoes, what would you do to get into the field?
- ◆ Do you know anyone else I could talk to or where else I can go for more information?
- ◆ What do people look for when they hire in this field/company?
- ◆ Is there a career path for people in this field/company and, if so, what are the steps?

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