

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Want to know what a career is really like? Ask someone with first-hand experience.

Many people wonder anxiously about which kind of job they will like or what they can do with a particular major. Surprisingly, very few people ever take advantage of the best ways to answer questions about careers: ask the professionals who are already doing the job. Talking to people about their jobs and asking them for advice and information is called an *informational interview*. It can be as simple as striking up conversations with friends and others about their occupations. But to take full advantage of this career exploration tool, requires time, commitment and being organized for a more methodical approach.

THE WHAT AND WHY OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An informational interview is a brief meeting between you and the person working in a career or industry that you would like to explore. Informational interviews usually last 20 to 30 minutes and are highly focused conversations for the following purposes:

- Learn about the realities of working in a particular occupation
- Decide among different occupations
- Focus your career goals
- Discover careers you never knew existed
- Gain the perspective of how to break into a particular field
- Uncover the hidden job market

<http://students.case.edu/careers/alumni/tips/informational.html>

Sample Introductory Letter/Email for Informational Interview

Jennifer Rite
23 Main Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015

September 15, 2004

Ms. Barbara Kelly
Title
Company
123 Main Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear Ms. Kelly:

I am currently involved in exploring *[insert career field or specific occupation here]* as a career path. I obtained your name through the Case Alumni Directory. I am hoping that you might be able to provide some information and guidance to me as I explore *[insert career field here]*. Would you be willing to speak to me for 15 minutes about your experience in this field? If so, is there a time that would be convenient for me to call you? *(If you live close to this person, you may want to request an in-person meeting.)*

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rite

<http://students.case.edu/careers/students/tips/networking/doc/sampleintro.pdf>

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Informational interviews are a crucial and often overlooked aspect of networking. They are the best ways to find out about a type of occupation and make a contact. Informational interviews are person-to-person conversations that help you gain information, insight, and advice from people who are in the functional areas, industries, and companies that hold your interest.

Many people hesitate to contact others for fear of imposing or asking for help. This is where the Alumni Career Network can be a benefit. The network is comprised of Case alumni from a wide variety of professions who have volunteered to share their knowledge and experience and who will welcome hearing from you.

The following is a list of sample questions you can ask during an informational interview:

SEARCHING FOR POSITIONS IN THE FIELD

- What sort of company would be most interested in my skills and experience?
- How do people find out about available positions? Are they advertised on web sites? If so, which ones? Are they advertised by word-of-mouth or by the Human Resource department?
- Do you think I should pursue a bigger vs. smaller company; a start-up vs. a more established company; or a mature vs. rapid growth/entrepreneurial company?
- If you were to hire someone to work with you today, which of the following factors would be most important in your hiring decision and why? Educational credentials, past work experience, specific skills and talents, the applicant's knowledge of your organization, your department, your job, etc.

NETWORKING IN THE FIELD

- Based on our conversation today, can you suggest other people who may be able to provide additional information or perspectives to me?
- May I have permission to use your name when I contact them?
- Can you suggest other related fields?
- Have you heard of any events or developments that suggest a particular company might have a need for someone like me?

ASKING ABOUT A TARGET COMPANY

- What is the size of the organization/geographic locations?
- What is the organizational structure?
- How would you describe the work climate?
- What is the average length of time employees stay with the organization?
- What types of formal or on-the-job training does the organization provide?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What are the arrangements for transferring from one division to another?
- Is the company planning to expand, maintain or downsize?
- How does it compare with its competitors?
- What new product lines/services are being developed?

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