

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

WHAT

AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW IS a meeting with a person working in a career or company in which you are interested. It is not a job interview, so it's important to keep focused on getting information, not a job offer.



WHY

- Gain firsthand, information about the day-to-day aspects of working within a particular career, industry or organization.
- Get tips and insider knowledge on how to prepare for and land your first career position.
- Learn about career paths you may not have known about.
- Initiate a professional relationship and expand your network.

HOW

1 IDENTIFY PEOPLE

- Get leads from friends, family, professors, advisors, coworkers, etc.
- Connect with employers at career fairs. Informational interview them and ask for referrals to other professionals in their organization.
- Use the LinkedIn "Find Alumni" tool.



2 REACH OUT / REQUEST A MEETING

- Schedule the meeting by phone or email.
- Explain your objective and if you were referred, mention the name of the person.
- Example Introduction:
"Hi, my name is ___ and I'm a student at UWM. I am researching careers in ___ to determine what career I would like to pursue. I'd appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your experiences, advice, and knowledge of the field. Would you have 20 minutes to talk at a time that is convenient for you?"

3 PLAN AHEAD

- Research the profession, field, and organization.
- Reflect on your interests, values, and skills and what you hope to gain from the informational interview.
- Develop questions that help you assess your compatibility with the career/work environment.
- Find questions online and on the back of this page.

4 CONDUCT THE MEETING

- Arrive 5 minutes early.
- Dress appropriately. Consider business casual.
- Refer to your prepared questions. It is ok to take notes or ask if you could record the meeting.
- Keep the meeting to the agreed amount of time.

5 FOLLOW UP

- Send a thank you note within 24 hours.
- Both email and handwritten notes are appropriate.
- Connect with the individual on LinkedIn.
- Reflect on what you learned and next steps.



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

Nature of the Work

1. What are the specific duties and responsibilities?
2. Describe a typical day/week?
3. What are the toughest problems you deal with?
4. What part of this work do you find most rewarding?

Work Qualifications

1. What kind of training, education, or course work is required?
2. What skills or talents are most essential in this career?
3. What personal qualities are important?
4. What kinds of prior experiences are absolutely essential?
5. How did you prepare yourself for this work?

Working Conditions

1. What type of setting, hours, atmosphere, etc. can be expected?
2. What obligations does this type of work place upon you outside of the ordinary workweek?
3. How much flexibility do you have in terms of hours of work, dress, vacation, etc.?

Internships / Work Entry

1. What types of internships/part-time jobs would you suggest before entering this field?
2. Where would I look for related experiences in this career, such as internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer positions?" (try to get specific names of places and people)
3. What types of employers hire people in this field? Where are they located?

Work Advancement

1. What additional training or qualifications are necessary for advancement?
2. What are some of the job possibilities for experienced workers in this field?
3. Is turnover high in this field?
4. Do people normally move to another organization or do they move up in this organization?

Employment Outlook

1. How rapidly is the present career field growing?
2. If the work you do was suddenly eliminated, what other kinds of work do you feel you could do?
3. How would you describe or estimate future prospects?

Salary Questions – Do Not Ask About Their Salary

1. What is the average starting salary?
2. What are the salaries for experienced workers?
3. How much do salaries vary in this career according to the employer, region, or industry?

Referral – Always Ask These

1. Based on our conversation today, what other people do you believe I should talk to?
2. Can you name a few people who might be willing to see me? May I have permission to use your name when I call or contact them?
3. What are the professional associations in this field?