

Informational Interviewing

Begin your career exploration by talking to those who are already in the field. Informational interviewing will give you an opportunity to ask questions of potential employers to learn more about their organization and begin networking with industry professionals.

Individual Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a conversation between you and an industry professional who works in a career that aligns with your interests and career goals. Think of an informational interview as a first step to developing your professional network, not a conversation that leads to hiring. Establishing relationships with people who share your interests can fortify your career ambitions by providing beneficial connections and teaching you more about your chosen field.

This is the time to ask questions and advice and get an insider's insight. We can offer you tips to help you ask the right questions and make the meeting work for you.

ASK AN EXPERT...

About the organization:

- What are the functions of your organization/department? What does your organization do?
- What products or services does this organization produce?
- Can you tell me about the background/history of this organization?
- Who are your customers?
- Who are your competitors? Where do you rank among the competition?
- What unique factors would you say set this organization apart from others?
- Do you have any organizational literature that would help me to learn more about this company?
- What values or philosophies does this organization represent?
- How are decisions made in this organization/your department (team effort, empowerment, top-down)?
- What basic assumptions or beliefs would you say are shared and supported by people in this industry or organization?

About specific position(s):

- What do you do in a typical workday or work week in your position?
- What positions do you supervise (if any)?
- What are some of the other types of positions in this industry?
- What type of entry-level positions would exist in this field/organization for someone just graduating from college?
- Do you have a copy of an organizational chart that would show me the progression of jobs from beginning to the top, as well as the reporting and supervision lines?
- Do you have any information on job specifications or job descriptions that I could have?

About interests:

- How did you personally become interested in this field?
- What attracted you to this organization/company in particular?

About working conditions:

- What obligations does your workplace upon you outside the standard 40-hour work week?
- Are there any travel obligations with your position?
- If there is overtime, is it due more to the nature of this field or the nature of this particular organization?
- How do your work requirements balance with your family/personal commitments?
- Can you leave work at work, or do you take work home with you?
- What is the typical dress code in the industry/at this organization?
- Can you speak about such factors as noise level, privacy, company morale, physical surroundings, and the overall environment?
- What compromises or trade-offs are there in your career field (ethical, financial, etc.)?

About trends and outlook:

- Have there been any noticeable trends in this industry?
- What is the outlook for this field/organization regarding growth, advancement or upcoming changes in general?
- What is the demand and security level for employees in this field/organization?

About requirements:

- What specific skills or aptitudes would someone need to enter this field?
- What personal qualities or attributes (temperament, attitudes, values, beliefs) seem to serve a person well in this type of work?
- What expectations does this organization have of its employees?
- What special training or specific education (degree or coursework) is required? Is a graduate degree required?
- What kind of part-time work experience could help someone to prepare for this field?
- Are any particular licenses or certifications essential in this field?
- My strongest interests involve _____. Would this job allow me to use these skills? How well suited is my background for this kind of work?
- Are there any special problems or concerns that someone considering this kind of work should prepare for?

About satisfaction levels:

- What do you find most rewarding about your work? Least rewarding?
- If you were ever to leave this kind of work, what would the reason be?
- Are your major frustrations internal or external factors?

About related fields and search techniques:

- What fields (if any) do people seem to “shift from” and do well in your career area?
- What fields (if any) do people leave this industry to pursue?
- What other fields are related to this one?
- How did you get your position in this organization?
- What steps did you take to get from your initial position to where you are now? (Did advancement take place?)
- What do you suggest is the best strategy for obtaining an entry level position in this field?
- How/where are most positions for this organization or this industry advertised?

For advice, recommendations and referrals:

- How would you advise people entering this kind of career?
- What should a person look for in an organization such as this as they consider positions?
- Would you mind if I contacted you / met with you again in the future if I need additional advice or information?
- Based on our conversation today, is there anyone else you think would be helpful for me to talk with?
- Would you be willing to let them know I will be in contact with them?
- May I mention your name as the person who referred me?
- Do you have any suggestions for my resume?
- Do you have any suggestions about my interpersonal skills?
- Are there any questions I didn’t ask you that you feel I should?