



# Effective Networking

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# What is an Informational Interview?



Information interviewing is just what it sounds like—interviewing designed to produce information.

~~What kind of information?~~ The information you need to choose or refine a career path, learn how to break in and find out if you have what it takes to succeed. Informational interviewing is an expanded form of chatting with your network contacts. It's the process of spending time with one of your network contacts in a highly focused conversation that provides you with key information you need to launch or boost your career.



# How to develop opportunities through networking

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- Experience has shown that informal networking is a very rich source of job leads and information about unpublished job opportunities. Successful networking requires that you have as many contacts as possible hear your story, so they realize you are in the job market.
- **Sources of Possible Contacts**
- To begin developing your network, secure names of specific individuals. These names can be obtained through several means:
  - Friends, family
  - Professors
  - Classmates
  - Alumni
  - Members of professional organizations
  - Former employers or co-workers
  - Internet list-servs
  - Community service agencies or area chambers of commerce
- Once you have identified people with whom you wish to speak, you can now plan to interview them. This is a powerful tool known as informational interviewing.
- Informational Interviews—The Ultimate Networking Technique



# The Ultimate Networking Technique

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- Startling Statistics...
  - One out of every 200 resumes (some studies put the number as high as 1,500 resumes) results in a job offer.
  - One out of every 12 informational interviews results in a job offer.



# Potential Results

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- Lots of information about career field and skills needed to do that job effectively.
- Management-level personal contacts
- Insight into the hidden job market
- Awareness of employers needs
- Because informational interviews are low-stress, you gain confidence in talking with people while learning what you need to know.
- Find out where you fit into a particular organization



# Reasons for Conducting Informational Interviews

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- To explore careers and clarify your career goals
- To expand your professional network
- To build confidence for your job interviews
- To access the most up-to-date career information
- To identify your professional strengths & weaknesses



# Guidelines for Informational Interviewing

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- Identify an occupation
- Identify people to interview
- Never ask for a job
- Prepare ahead of time



# Scheduling the Informational Interview

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## Guidelines:

- Email
- Letter
- Phone
- In person



# Letter/Email

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- An introductory letter/email, written much like a cover letter, without the job pitch, is a great way to get your name out there.
  - Brief intro about yourself
  - Why you are writing to this individual
  - How you got their name (if someone referred you)
  - Brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person's field, organization or location
  - Why you would like to converse—for information and advice
  - Include a sentence about how and when you will contact that person



## Phone/In Person

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- People who grant informational interviews are generally willing to share 20-30 minutes of their time to explain their expertise in their field. Be flexible in your scheduling. Discuss scheduling an appointment. Often he or she will invite you to his/her workplace.



## Here are a few approaches to requesting an information interview:

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- “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I’m conducting career research in your field. I would like to meet and talk with you for about 30 minutes so that I can find out more about your field of expertise.”



## ...another approach

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- “Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I’m a student at the University of Michigan, School of Information. I got your name from \_\_\_\_ (or I met you at \_\_\_\_). You’re in a line of work I am interested in, and I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I’m sure that my questions could be answered in a 20-30 minute informational interview.”



# Preparing for an Informational Interview

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- Do some research on the company/profession
- Call to confirm appt the day before
- Dress appropriately (like you would for a job interview)
- Bring notebook to take notes
- Bring resume



# Questions to Ask

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- What is your job like?
  - A typical day?
  - What are the duties/responsibilities of your job?
  - What kinds of problems do you deal with?
  - What percentage of your time is spend doing what?

How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?



# Questions to Ask

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- How did you get your job? What jobs/experiences have led you to your present position?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain this necessary experience?
- What do you like and not like about working in this field?
- Why did you decide to work for this company?
- What are the skills that are the most important for a position in this field?



# Questions to Ask

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- What can you tell me about the employment outlook in your field?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in this field?
- What other organizations hire people to perform the functions you do here?
- What special advice to you have for a student seeking to qualify for a position in this company?
- Would you mind taking a look at my resume?



# More of what to do in the interview

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- Share information about yourself, but do not dominate the interview.
- Be a good listener



# Build Your Network

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- Ask for a business card
- Ask for referrals



# After the Interview

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- Send a thank you note via email or mail
- Stay in contact periodically with your progress.



# Record, Analyze & Evaluate

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- Ask yourself the following questions:
  - What did I learn from the interview?
  - How does what I learned fit with my own interest, abilities, goal, values, etc.?
  - What do I still need to know?
  - What plan of action can I make?



# Helpful Informational Interview Web sites

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- Informational Interviewing:  
[http://www.apsu.edu/~careers/Car\\_dev/infointerview.htm](http://www.apsu.edu/~careers/Car_dev/infointerview.htm)
  - A very comprehensive examination of informational interviews
- Informational Interviewing:  
<http://danenet.wicip.org/jets/jet-9407-p.html>
  - A concise look at the step in the informational interviewing process—offers 20 sample questions to ask at the interview.
- Informational Interviews:  
<http://www.rivier.edu/departments/cardev/talk.html>
  - A general overview, with sample scripts, questions and thank you letter.