

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

**Arranging informational interviews can be intimidating. Here are some steps that will help you in using informational interviews as a part of your career development.**

- These type of conversations can be through phone, video call, or in-person. Email is an alternative, but should be used as a last resort.
- Be prepared with a list of dates and times that you are available to meet or talk by phone. Be flexible with their schedule and try to make it as easy as possible.
- This is NOT a job interview. The purpose of your meeting is to learn more about the field, industry, or firm. You are also gathering information to be prepared for the field. You should not expect this to be a job interview or result in an offer for a position.
- Time is limited. Do your homework on the industry and the organization beforehand. Set goals for what you would like to achieve in the informational interview and develop a targeted list of questions. You should plan for 20-30 minutes.
- Be ready to describe your goals, your experience, and your qualifications. While this is not a job interview, your contact may be able to pass along information about you to other people in the firm.
- Don't be afraid to ask for additional contacts. After talking about your background and skills, ask for referrals to other people in the field that can help you gather more information.
- Be focused and targeted. Know what questions will best help you in your search. Develop a target list of companies that you can share with the interviewer. This will help them understand who might best be able to supply the information you need.
- Be ready to share your resume!
- ALWAYS follow up an informational interview with a thank you. Email is easiest and most straight forward.

## **Why do informational interviews?**

These conversations can help you build professional relationships, learn from others, and market yourself.

## **What It's Not:**

Networking is NOT asking for a job or favor or "using" contacts, nor is it only useful during your job search. It's a very normal part of developing relationships in business.

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## How to Arrange an Informational Interview:

*"Hello Mr. Smith: My name is Kasey Roo and I am a student at the Bloch School of Management at UMKC. I found you through the Roo Network, and wanted to reach out to see if you would be willing to talk with me about your field. I noticed your background in \_\_\_\_\_ and would love to know more about your career!"*

*"Dear Mr. Sabatani: I am a Marketing student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and am exploring career options. I started following the American Marketing Association-KC chapter and enjoy reading the discussions there. Would you be willing to connect with me so that I can learn more about your work? I'm specifically interested in learning about your work with developing Hallmark's creative brand."*

*"Dear Ms. Higuchi: My name is Ashley and I am an Accounting student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In particular, I'm interested in learning more about audit and saw that you are an Audit Manager with KPMG's office in Kansas City. I'd love to connect with you to learn more about this area in accounting and how you got to KPMG."*

### **Top tips for a successful networking request:**

- Introduce yourself and explain why you are interested in connecting with them.
- Explain what information you are looking for (contacts in your field, information on the industry or firm, or advice about your search).
- Keep it short (<75 words)
- Make it human: talk about your connection first
- Request advice & insight, not job assistance (so no resumes at first & no "about me")
- Define interest specifically ("your experience at company X") and generally ("audit tax in public accounting")

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## Sample questions:

- *How did you get your start in [\_\_\_\_\_] field?*
- *What do you think are key characteristics to succeeding in the \_\_\_\_ industry (for an internship or a permanent position).*
- *What do I need to do throughout my undergraduate/graduate program to be competitive in this market?*
- *What are organizations looking for in interns and/or permanent hires?*
- *What is the typical day/week/month like for an intern/employee with your firm/company?*
- *What types of projects are assigned to interns/new hires?*
- *What advice would you give to someone looking for an internship/position in this market?*
- *How do you think my previous work experience will be viewed by organizations such as yours?*
- *How can you break into this function/industry without prior experience? Do you have examples of how people have done this?*
- *What led to your decision to take this job? Compare and contrast your views of the industry and others you considered. Was there a framework or set of perspectives that helped you make your decision?*
- *What are the rewards of working in this function/industry?*
- *What information do you wish you had before entering into this function/industry?*
- *What are the challenges, demands, and other things students should know about being in this function/industry?*
- *What are the career stages and paths, beginning with an entry-level job for the function/industry?*
- *What was the toughest interview question you had? How did you handle it? How should you have handled it?*
- *What are the common interview questions and topics students should be prepared to discuss for interviews in this function/industry?*
- *What are the best sources of information for this function/industry?*
- *What professional development processes or professional association involvement are helpful as one grows in this function/industry?*
- *What classes helped you the most in the early stages of your career?*
- *What resources proved most useful in your career search process?*
- *If you had to redo your job search, what would you do differently?*
- *Some of the students are making a career transition. Did you do this? How did you make the transition?*
- *How often do you interact with colleagues from different functions?*

## How to Follow Up:

*Thank you for your time. I really appreciate your insight and advice. Are there any questions I can answer for you? As I prepare for my job search, are there other people I should talk to? Would you be willing to give some additional leads/contacts that might be able to provide additional information?*