



Informational Interview



Purpose

To gather information on interesting careers from people who are or were employed in a professional field to help you in narrowing your career choices. Informational interviewing allows you to personally research a job, the people in the field, companies, and ultimately, find out if you are suited for such a career.

Setting up an Interview

Setting up an interview with the right person is the first step in networking. You need to develop leads to contact in your areas of interest such as the Chamber of Commerce, professional organizations, school career centers, employment offices, teachers, friends, family members and the yellow pages. Having made your choice of career areas to explore and acquired some contacts, you are now ready to set up your first interview. Before you call, you should go over in your mind and on paper what you want to say on the phone.

Sample Conversation for Initial Contact

"Hello my name is Christopher Downing and I'm interested in exploring the field of Three Dimensional Computer Imaging. I understand that your firm is involved in this area. I'm investigating various career areas so that I can get a realistic view of the career potential in this field. I would like to talk to you or another member of your staff about the field."

The person may be reluctant or say, "We have no job openings at this time!" If so, explain that you are not looking for a job. Stress that you are only in the process of career exploration and researching this particular field. When an appointment is set, thank them, confirm date and time.

"Thank you, Mr. Lee. I look forward to seeing you Friday at 2:00 o'clock! May I have directions to your office?"

Be Prepared

When you arrive for your appointment, be prepared. Dress as if you were going to a job interview. Bring paper, pen and questions. Have your resume to refer to in case you are asked, "Do you have any particular background for this type of work?" Do some research in the Career Center or library to gather information about the field or company.

Listen

Above all, exercise your listening skills. Often you can find the "inside scoop" about a job or company that job seekers seldom uncover. Stay alert during the interview situation for signs that the interview is over. Clock watching, paper shuffling, and general nervousness are all signs that the person needs to get back to work. Take the hint and say, "You have helped me immensely, Mr. Lee, in understanding more about this industry. I appreciate your taking the time to share information with me, ect." Be sure to ask for names of other contacts in the field. Thank your mentor before you leave.

Follow Up

Be sure to follow-up interviews with a written thank you. This is an important part of networking, because it reinforces your visit and gives you exposure to people in certain professions. In the future, you may need to use your contacts for job hunting purposes. Perhaps if you decide to seek employment in this field, your contacts may be available to critique your resume.

Final Advice

Final advice is to enjoy yourself. Believe it or not, people live through the process and many learn to enjoy the power it gives the career seeker. Informational interviewing is an interview situation where you are in control of the interview. So as not to pose a threat, you can often ask questions with much greater freedom than if you were a job hunter. It really can be fulfilling to investigate your career fantasies. As you become skilled in networking, you begin to enjoy the chance to gather

information that will promote career decisions. Informational interviewing is an investment in your career future. The time you spend exploring will pay off as you expand your career horizons.

Questions to Ask

Keep in mind that practice will be the key to handling this smoothly and confidently. When you interview a specific person, it is essential that you prepare questions to be answered. We suggest that you write them down in order to save time and ensure that you cover all areas of interest.

Informational Interview Website

quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

(tutorial takes you step-by-step through the informational interview process)

Sample Questions to Ask When Informational Interviewing

(Choose a few from this list or make up your own)

1. What is your job title?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. How did you get started in this type of work?
4. How would you describe your present job responsibilities and duties?
5. How would you describe a typical day?
6. What type of training or education did you receive for this position?
7. What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?
8. What do you think are some important things that someone going into this field should know about?
9. Does this type of work have a good future?
10. What future goals do you have?
11. Did any of your past jobs prepare you for this one?
12. What kinds of courses did you need in college to prepare you for this job?
13. What level of education was required to obtain this job?
14. What has contributed to your career success?
15. What are some problems you have encountered on your job? How have you resolved them?
16. In what way has your present job prepared you for greater responsibilities?
17. How did you choose this profession?
18. Have you had any additional training or education since you completed college?
19. How do you think college contributed to your overall career development?
20. What is your work schedule?
21. What job benefits do you receive?
22. What is the salary range for this type of position?
23. If you had it to do all over again, what changes would make in your career?
24. In considering joining another company, what are some of the factors you would take into account?
25. What are some of the things in this job that are important to you?
26. What kind of position would you like to be holding in five years? Ten years?
27. Do you belong to any civic or professional organizations or clubs? Which ones? Why did you join them? Did you hold office?
28. Would you recommend a student at SBCC take the same career path today that you took, in order to get in your position?

Career Center Location & Hours:

Student Services Bldg. – Room SS-282, (805) 965-0581, ext. 2331
Hours: Mon. 9–4:15, Tues. 9–4:15, Weds. 9–6:45, Thur. 9–4:15, Fri. 9–1:00