



NORTHWEST CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Informational Interview Process

What is an Informational Interview?

An informal meeting with a person who:

- Performs work you may have an interest in doing
- Works for one of your target companies
- Possesses expertise in the field

Some elements of the informational interview include:

- You need information
- You ask the questions
- You guide the meeting

Why Conduct an Informational Interview?

- Gain information about best practices in the field/industry
- Make a career decision
- "Try on" a job without accepting it
- Get advice or feedback
- Learn about other areas of the Company
- Let others know you're out there
- Learn about potential jobs from the people who do the work
- Broaden your network of "contacts"

PREPARATION

Identity "Who": Obtain names of people from friends, colleagues, family members, professors, etc. Gather information about their company website. Talk to others and/or read available material.

Initiate Contact: Call the person for an interview. Introduce yourself as a student seeking information about the industry or company. Be specific about your objective for the interview. Make it clear you are looking for information, not a job. Mention how you received the person's name. Ask for 30 minutes of the person's time at his/her office when it is most convenient for him/her.

Interview Intentionally: Be prepared with a clear set of questions for the interview. The people you interview will remember your interest, preparation, and planning.

Invite Feedback: Consider providing your contacts with a copy of your objectives and questions, as this may help them prepare for your meeting.

Dress to Impress: Research the dress code of the industry and wear the most appropriate clothing to blend in.

YOUR BEHAVIOR

Be Polite: Thank the individual for taking the time to meet with you. Tell him/her you would like to get information about opportunities in the field. Do NOT ask for a job or internship!

Be Organized: Ask your prepared questions as well as questions that come up during the conversation.

Be Flexible: Allow the interview take a different direction if the individual wants to ask you questions. If he/she is obviously interested in your skills and interest, feel free to share them and give him/her your resume.

Be Professional: Act as if you were in a formal interview.

Be Mindful: Ask the questions that are the most important first, because when your time is up, you must say, "Thank you for sharing your time and for sharing this information."

Be Prompt: Arrive on time and don't stay longer than the interview schedule unless the interviewee requests it.

Be Gracious: Close the interview by thanking the person for his/her time and valuable information. Ask for the names of other contacts that might offer additional help and whether you can use his/her name as a reference.

FOLLOW-UP

Keep Records: After the interview, record the information you received.

Send a Thank You Note: Send a brief thank-you note within 24 hours. It keeps the door open for future contact.

Stay Connected: Keep in contact with the people you've interviewed. Let them know what's happening.

Pursue Referrals: Obtain interviews with the additional contacts you've just received. It is best to talk to as many people as possible to get a good picture of the work you are considering.

Sample Questions

Select five to eight of the following questions as part of your informational interview. Do NOT ask all of these questions. Choose those that are most relevant and important to you.

1. What attracted you to this profession?
2. What do you find most interesting about this type of work?
3. What do you find least interesting about this type of work?
4. What has your career path been like?
5. At what point in your life did you know that this kind of work was right for you? How did it become clear?
6. What was your college major?
7. What words of wisdom would you have to offer to a person preparing in college for this field?
8. What skills, knowledge, qualities, and/or strengths do employers look for when hiring for this position?
9. How did you become a successful candidate for this position?
10. What, if anything, would you have done differently?
11. How does someone without work experience obtain a position?
12. Are there training opportunities available with this company?
13. Does your company offer shadowing or internship opportunities?
14. What sort of volunteer positions would aid my opportunities to get hired in this field?
15. What are the general benefits (insurance, retirement, pay for continuing education/training, etc.) available to employees?
16. What are the physical demands of the position?
17. What is the general entry-level pay for someone starting in this field?
18. Is this profession a growing occupation? How difficult is it to become employed in _____ County?
19. What are the typical responsibilities of a _____ in this company?
20. Generally, what are the working hours? How are they scheduled in a week?
21. What kinds of opportunities exist for advancement?
22. What professional associations/organizations are related to this field?
23. What computer knowledge is necessary for this position? What software knowledge is best to have?
24. Could you suggest another person in the field who would be able to provide me with information as well?

Name: _____ Company: _____ Phone: _____

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