Informational Interviews

An informational interview or informational meeting is a brief conversation with somebody working in a field or at an organization that you find intriguing and want to learn more about. The informational interview is not an actual job interview. In fact, the roles are reversed and you get to ask the questions and run the discussion. You can accomplish a great deal through informational interviews:

- Explore careers and focus your thinking and decision-making
- Learn about different fields of work in an experiential way
- Practice having conversations with new people in a variety of environments and bolster your confidence
- Expand your knowledge base and learn the language used in various occupations
- Add to your list of networking contacts
- Happen upon not-yet-posted open positions

Here are the steps to arrange and conduct an effective informational interview:

1. Call the individual you want to speak with and let him / her know that you’d like to schedule an informational interview. Right off the bat, stress that you are not asking for a job, but simply gathering information and trying to learn about a particular field or line of work. Ask for 20 to 30 minutes.

2. Prepare. Do not try to wing it! Spend some time thinking about what you’d like to learn from the conversation. Write down the questions you plan to ask and / or the topics you’d like to discuss. Also, jot down a few notes for opening things up.

3. Remember, you are not being interviewed, so relax and enjoy the conversation. Do your best listening. Feel free to take notes.

4. Stick to the agenda and honor the timeframe. If you said a half hour, end on time. You can always set up another meeting down the road. Also, there will be a strong temptation, especially if the conversation goes well, to ask about job openings. Don’t do it! Asking will torpedo the entire meeting and make you look desperate. If they bring it up, fine.

5. Thank the person profusely for their time and information: first, when you schedule the meeting; second, during the conversation; third, after the meeting; and fourth; follow up by sending a thank-you note.

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Questions you might want to ask:

1. What do you like most about your work?

2. How did you become interested in this field? How did you get your job?

3. What are the most important duties of this position? What is a typical workday or week like?

4. What strengths and skills are needed for a person in this position?

5. What is the typical career path for a person in your position?

6. What are some other types of positions in this field/industry?

7. How would you describe your company’s organizational culture?

8. What are some of the major challenges and opportunities facing this organization?

9. How could I learn more about this line of work?

10. What advice would you offer someone who is interested in pursuing work in this field?

   (What other questions do you want to ask? Jot them down here.)

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Learn more at: [http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html)