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Informational interview



Instructions for use

- The following document is an electronic form for you to add your answers to.
- Simply read through the text and where prompted place your cursor on the areas to fill in and add your text.
- Begin by saving this document to a location on your computer, add your name to the file path where indicated so that you can come back to it at anytime or share with others.

Informational interview

An 'Informational interview' is where you locate someone in the industry you want to work in, give them a call and ask if you could meet with them to talk about working in that industry as you are aiming to build your networks and gain more information about the industry. If asked in the right manner most people will take the time to give you some insight. You need to be well prepared so you don't waste their time.

To help you prepare to do this, we have created an 'informational interview preparation tool'.

Let's walk our way through...



Prepare

1. Refine a list of all the questions you would like answered about this industry and role. (See some suggestions on the next page)
2. Using your list of target companies, find out the name of a person who works in that company that would be good for you to connect to. Be strategic here. Don't go straight for the CEO, consider someone in a role similar to the one you are pursuing or a lower level manager.
3. You can also ask a friend or someone in your network who works in the industry to recommend someone to interview.
4. Write out what you are going to say to them in the box below....

For example:

Hi, my name is _____. I am currently considering a career as a _____ and I am trying to really understand this line of work. I have looked into the company you work with and it aligns so well with where I am heading. I was wondering if you would be willing to share some insights with me. Could I buy you a cup of coffee at a time that suits you?

Or write your own here:

Job title I am researching: _____

Title and name of person being interviewed: _____

Company: _____

Date and location of interview: _____

Informational interview questions to ask

Look through the following list of questions. *Remember, the best informational interviews will happen when you step away from automatically generated questions, and really connect with what you want to know and how that person can open your eyes and connect you to opportunities.*

So in addition to the below suggestions, add at least two of your own questions that are personally important to you.

Occupational questions

1.

You are the _____. What are the duties performed during a typical day? Week? Month? Year? Do you have a set routine? (As the person describes the duties, ask what skills are needed).
How much variety is there on a day-to-day basis?

2.

What educational program is recommended as preparation? (Distinguish between courses which are desirable and those which are indispensable.)

3.

What kinds of courses are most valuable in order to gain skills necessary for success in this occupation? (Distinguish between courses)

4.

What degree or certificate do employers look for?

5.

What kind of work experience would employers look for in a job applicant?

6.

How can a person obtain this work experience?

7. Are any co-curricular activities recommended?
8. What steps besides meeting educational and experiential requirements are necessary to "break into" this occupation? (i.e. - exam? interview? union membership?)
9. What opportunities are there for advancement? To what position? Is an advanced degree needed? (If so, in what discipline?)
10. Which skills are most important to acquire? (i.e. - which skills do employers look for?)
11. What are the main or most important personal characteristics for success in the field?
12. What are the different settings in which people in this occupation may work (i.e. - educational institutions, businesses, etc.)?
13. What other kinds of workers frequently interact with this position?
14. What are the employment prospects in the advisor's geographic area? Where are the best employment prospects? What are the employment prospects at the advisor's company? Is mobility a necessary factor for success?
15. What are some related occupations?
16. What are the different salary ranges?
17. Does the typical worker have a set schedule (i.e. - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or are the hours flexible?
18. What are the demands and frustrations that typically accompany this type of work?
19. Is there a typical chain of command in this field?

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| 20. | How can you determine that you have the ability or potential to be successful in this specific occupation? |
| 21. | Is this a rapidly growing field? Is it possible to predict future needs for workers in this field? |
| 22. | What types of technology are used and how are they used? |
| 23. | Where might job listings be found? |
| 24. | What entry level positions are there in this field? |

Functional questions

- | | |
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| 1. | How many hours does the advisor work? |
| 2. | What sort of education does the advisor have? |
| 3. | What has been the advisor's career path from leaving school to present? |
| 4. | What are the satisfying aspects of the advisor's work? |
| 5. | What are the greatest pressures in the work? |
| 6. | What are the major job responsibilities? |
| 7. | What are the toughest problems and decisions with which the advisor must cope with? |
| 8. | What are the dissatisfying aspects of the work? Is this typical of the field? |
| 9. | How would the advisor describe the atmosphere/culture of the work place? |

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| 10. | Does the advisor think you left you out any important questions that would be helpful in learning about the job or occupation? |
| 11. | Can the advisor suggest others who may be valuable sources of information? |
| 12. | If you were me, knowing what you know now about this career choice, what would you tell me? |
| 13. | |
| 14. | |

Closing statement:

Prepare a strong closing statement and memorise it!

For example:

“Would you mind if I take your business card? I would really like to add you to my Linkedin Profile if that’s okay?”

Or

“I really want to thank you for the time you have given me today. I have learnt so much. I do have my have a copy of my resume here, so if a position becomes available that you thought would be suitable for me, you have it on file. If you or anyone in this industry you know is interested in someone with my skill set could you please pass this resume onto them. I would be very grateful. Thanks again for your time.”

Prepare your close statement here:



Make contact and then follow up

- Contact the relevant person in the company and arrange a time to meet.
- Treat the interview as if it's a job interview. Present well but be relaxed. This is a lot less stressful than a regular job interview because you are initiating the contact. Make sure you have a copy of your resume to give them at the end.
- Following the interview, take a few minutes out to note all the important information you gained. Fill out this quick debrief:

1. What was said?

2. So what does this mean for my consideration of this job role?

3. Now what do I do? What follow up action seems important at this point? Who else can I contact from this meeting to grow my network?

- *Always follow up with a thank you note and search for them on LinkedIn and request to connect with them.*



Repeat

- *Aim to conduct at least one solid interview per role you are pursuing.*

Remember, this is a process for you by you. You will get out what you put in so be thorough.