

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational Interviewing: The process of identifying and interviewing personal and professional contacts with the goal of gathering career information (rather than to obtain an actual offer). Like networking, informational interviewing is based on the premise that people are a tremendous source of information and they like to share.

WHY?

- Opportunity to speak with a professional in order to gain further information about related careers and the best ways to enter your field of choice.
- Learn about what it is like to do a particular type of work in a certain organization.
- Gather information about what internship and career opportunities are available.
- Develop contacts in key positions with people who hire or make recommendations on hiring.
- Find out about jobs and career paths that you did not know existed.
- Opportunity to promote your skills, attributes and abilities in a less threatening but important professional environment.

WHO?

Ask friends, professors, family members, and past employers for leads concerning individuals that may provide valuable information relating to your interests.

Reach out to friends, GAMP mentors, relatives, co-workers, parents, members of professional associations, employers who post jobs on Handshake, and LinkedIn contacts that do work that sounds interesting.

HOW?

Send a written email or LinkedIn request to the person with whom you want to speak.

Make sure to introduce yourself and tell them how you found their contact information. (ex. Referred by mutual acquaintance, GAMP mentor match, etc.). Also let them know why you are reaching out to them. Some other things you may want to mention in your message are that you:

- Are in the research process and trying to make some decisions about your career and you want to learn more.
- Want to learn how someone with their background and skills might enter and succeed in that field.
- Are not yet in the job search mode, but rather the research mode. Be clear that you are seeking career information, not job offers.
- Would like feedback on your resume and ask if that is okay during the meeting.
- Would like to meet with them either in person (if possible) or via phone or email, and ask them which mode they would prefer.

PREPARING FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Conduct research on the company and field that interests you. The information you obtain will be the basis for the questions you ask during the interview. Your contact will be able to supplement and support your research with real world perspective.

TIPS

- Dress Professionally.
- Respect the person's time by keeping the informational interview brief and to the point.
- Ask specific questions about information that you were unable to locate through your research.
- Maintain eye contact, smile, and be actively engaged.
- Take notes by writing key phrases to remind you of the answer.
- Answer questions about yourself if you are asked.
- Ask for names of other contacts towards the end of the conversation, as this is one of the best ways to expand your network.
- Keep the door open by asking if it is okay to get back in touch with the contact as you progress in your career development.
- Thank the contact for their valuable time and important information.
- Write a thank you note describing what was of value to you. This will help you be remembered. Mention what you talked about, and what you learned and who you will follow up with as a result of the person's suggestions.
- Organize your notes and contact information for future follow up efforts.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- How did you get into this work?
- How did you prepare yourself for this job and profession? What classes, extracurricular activities, or projects can I do to prepare myself for this career field?
- Knowing what you know now, would you take the same job again? Why or why not?
- What is the most valuable thing you learned in college?
- What do you do in a typical day in this position?
- What skills, attributes and /or personal qualities are necessary in this career?
- What, in your opinion, is the job outlook in this career field? What will impact its growth?
- How do you feel about your job? Are there high times, low times? Would you advise people to enter this career field? Why or why not?
- What are other specialties in this career field? May I keep you informed of how my reflection and job search is going?

SUGGESTED TIPS TO FOLLOW

- 1) Develop a contact list of people to informational interview
- 2) Initiate contact and research company and field
- 3) Organize information and prepare for meeting
- 4) Meet with contact to conduct the informational interview
- 5) Follow up on suggestions given and thank contact