

CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Informational interviewing is the process of strategically interviewing professionals in a career area in which you wish to explore career options. Information interview should be professional, planned and well organized. Students should create a list of questions which are appropriate for the interview.

IDENTIFYING AN OCCUPATION AND A PROFESSIONAL TO INTERVIEW

Talk with your “network” of family, friends, colleagues, peers and co-workers to identify good professionals with whom you can conduct an informational interview. When you identify a professional, contact that person by telephone or email and ask if he or she would be willing to meet with you for an informational interview. Indicate your availability to meet. Plan to meet with the person at their office if this is acceptable, so you can see the work environment. Dress appropriately and always follow up with a thank you note.

NETWORKING

One of the most effective and underutilized methods of learning about opportunities for information interviewing is networking. Networking is building relationships with personal contacts and marketing yourself to friends, family, colleagues, peers, and other personal contacts. Networking is important because there are many jobs and internships available that are never posted on websites or advertised in newspapers or professional publications. Think about how you might start a network. Attend job fairs, collect business cards, join a local networking group, join a professional organization, volunteer at local events which include business professionals, join a club or organization in the area that is devoted to your personal interests.

RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS

Students should plan to prepare some general and some specific questions for an informational interview. Plan to take a notebook and a pencil or pen to take notes. Be prepared to answer questions about yourself as well.

Examples of good general questions include:

1. How did you get in this field? What was your career path?
2. How would you describe a typical work day or week?
3. What are the most satisfying aspects of your job?
4. What are your biggest frustrations?
5. How would you describe your work environment (fast-paced, deadlines, routine, exciting)?
6. Do you belong to any professional organizations?
7. Are there any websites you can recommend?
8. What other career areas do you believe are related to your work?
9. What are the latest development and primary issues in the field today?
10. How does your career affect your lifestyle?
11. How do you see your job changing over the next 10 years?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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