

Informational Interviewing

Benefits:

- Allows you to get firsthand and relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry, company, or position
- Find out about Career Paths you may not have known existed
- Clarify your goals/ interests, Improve your communication skills and build your network



Rules:

- Do not ask for a job, you are there to gather information
- Treat as an interview (arrive early, come prepared, dress professionally)
- Be polite and friendly and don't ask them how much money they make
- Listen carefully to what the employer has to say; take notes
- Meet at the person's convenience and make sure you are on time

Get Started - Identify individuals to informational interview

Option #1: Talk to everyone you know to find people who work in your field of interest or who know someone who works in a position related to your area of interest

Option #2: Identify companies/organizations of interest and contact an individual in the appropriate department. Most companies have a directory so you can identify the best person.

Making the Request: Contact by Telephone / E-mail Example:

Hello. My name is Jane Wilson and I am connected with Youth Opportunities Unlimited. I have become very interested in the food and hospitality industry and would like to find out as much as I can about the field. Would it be possible to schedule 20-30 minutes with you at your convenience for an informational interview to ask you a few questions and to get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?

What you can ask at the Interview - Sample questions:

- Tell me a little about yourself
- How did you get started in your career?
- What qualifications / schooling do you have?
- How would someone get started in the field now?
- What experiences have helped you most?
- Do you know anyone else that might be helpful for me to speak with?

- What experience or preparation would you recommend for this job / field?
- What are alternative career paths related to this field?
- What professional organizations do you belong to?
- What is the most challenging part of your job?

During the Interview...

- Listen carefully; take notes
- Respect the time limit you have agreed upon
- Remember to thank the individual for their time

Follow up

- Send a thank you to the person within 1-2 days after the informational interview thanking them for their time and highlighting something valuable you learned from them
- Sending a thank you letter/card is preferred over an email

Written Thank You Letter- Example:

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to do an informational interview with you on December 12, 2013.

I really appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the food and hospitality field and it was great hearing about how you worked your way to becoming the Head Chef at the You Made it Cafe. The information you shared with me will be very helpful for my employment search.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith
msmith@uwo.ca

555-555-1234

Adapted from: Western University http://careerservices.ssc.uwo.ca/resources/informational_interviewing.html