
INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

This can be an extremely important part of building your network and finding a job. Often people are interested in a particular career or corporation but do not have any contacts. By setting up an information interview, you can make a contact, find out more about the company and the career, and get a foot in the door for future job openings.

If you really do not know anyone, then setting up an information interview will start with some research on the company and the employees and will be followed by a cold call or email to the person that you would like to meet with. As intimidating as this may seem, people are surprisingly willing to talk about themselves. So you may be pleasantly surprised at the reception you receive provided that you preface the request in the right manner. You need to ensure that you let the person know that you are a recent or soon to be graduate and are interested in a career in his/her field and would be grateful if he/she would have a few moments to talk to you about what he/she does and the pros and cons of his/her career choice. You do not want them to think that you are calling them to try and get a job.

- When you go to meet for the information interview be sure to dress professionally. Although this is not a job interview, the impression that you make on this person could be vital for the future
- Be prepared; have a short list of questions that you would like to ask and try not to take up too much time
- If you are meeting for coffee or lunch you should be prepared to offer to pay for the drinks/meal. Basically, if you invite, you pay
- Have a resume in your bag, but do not give it to him/her unless she/he asks for it
- At the end of the interview you can give him/her one of your contact cards and let him/her know that if they do hear of any opportunities that you would be thankful if he/she would let you know
- Be sure to follow up with a thank you card. This is extremely important and can make or break his/her impression of you

It is important to keep a journal or notebook detailing sources you have consulted and thoughts or ideas you have had. This way you will not have to worry about forgetting to follow up on a lead. You will also be able to pick up where you left off the next time you sit down to work, rather than inadvertently duplicating your research efforts. Perhaps most importantly of all, you will remember to follow up on leads generated by your networking contacts and to keep in regular contact with them as you continue your career exploration and/or development.

NETWORKING IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Networking should not be only about what you get out of the relationships. That is no way to build a lasting or fruitful relationship. If you come across an interesting article or a relevant job listing, share it with your network. The point of having a career network is to have resources that can help, but, you should reciprocate whenever you can.

PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING TOOLS

JibberJobber - JibberJobber is a site that allows you to keep track of the information you collect during a job search. You can track companies, people, log the status of applications, dates of interviews, follow-ups etc. This is an excellent tool for anyone who is actively seeking employment and conducting informational interviews

LinkedIn – LinkedIn is a network of over 135 million professionals. This professional social networking site is a great way to begin to build your on-line presence and to connect with people from a wide range of careers and companies. Be sure to keep your resume information up to date and work towards building a profile that is 100% complete including recommendations.

VisualCV - Create a professional on-line resume to share with contacts and prospective employers. This is a free tool that will also help to illustrate your pro-active, up to date and professional image.

RESOURCES

Informational Interview: What is an Informational Interview and How it Can Help Your Career. Doyle, Alison. Retrieved, February 3rd, 2012 from:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/infointerviews/a/infointerview.htm>

- This is an article by Alison Doyle, a job search guide for About.com since 1998. The article provides you with information about the benefits of informational interviews, tips on how to conduct a successful interview and what questions to ask.

Informational Interviewing Tutorial. Quintessential Careers. Retrieved, February 3rd, 2012 from:

http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html

- This comprehensive resource provides information on reasons and results for informational interviewing, guidelines, indentifying people to interview, scheduling interviews, how to dress, and what to do before, during and after an informational interview.

Informational Interviewing. Canadian Careers. Retrieved, February 3rd, 1012 from:

<http://www.canadiancareers.com/infointerview.html>

- This quick and concise document tells you the basics about how to conduct an informational interview from a Canadian-cultural perspective, what questions to ask and other brief tips. If you don't have a lot of time, but want some information on the topic, this is a good resource.

For further information on how to conduct successful informational interviews schedule an appointment by emailing Clare at ctatter3@uwo.ca.